

PSYCHOANALYTIC ESSAYS ON

POWER and *Vulnerability*

Edited by HALINA BRUNNING



KARNAC

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Halina Brunning

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Halina Brunning is a chartered clinical psychologist, organisational consultant, and executive coach. She has published extensively on clinical and organisational issues, edited several books, including *Executive Coaching: Systems Psychodynamic Perspective* (2006) and a trilogy of books applying psychoanalytic understanding to complex world phenomena (Karnac Books, 2010, 2011, 2013). She runs training events on coaching in Europe and the UK for the HEC, the iCoach Academy, Il Nodo, Raszto, Prorozvoyovo and other institutions. She is an associate fellow of the British Psychological Society, a member of ISPSO (the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations), OPUS (an Organisation for Promoting Understanding of Society), and the Association of Coaching, and a founder member of the BPS coaching psychology forum. She tries to integrate visual art and symbolic representation in all of her professional work, including her clinical, consulting, and coaching practice.

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Organizational Psychology, amongst others. He organised “Vulnerable Selves, Disciplining Others”, an ESRC-funded seminar series examining the roles of victims and perpetrators in contemporary society. He also coaches at board level in national and international firms.

Richard Morgan-Jones is an organisational consultant and a psychoanalytic psychotherapist in Eastbourne, UK. He was educated at Cambridge, Oxford, and Exeter Universities in anthropology, theology, and education, and he is a training therapist at the London Centre for Psychotherapy. He belongs to the Organization for Promoting the Understanding of Society (OPUS), the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations (ISPSO), the European Business Ethical Network (EBEN), and the Restorative Justice Consortium (RJC). He directs Work Force Health: Consulting and Research. He has written *The Body of the Organisation and Its Health* (Karnac), an exploration of how organisations get under the skin.

Claudia Nagel holds a PhD in organisational psychology and an MBA from Cologne University. Claudia is also trained as a Jungian Analyst at ISAP (Zurich). She started her professional career as a director of the Institute of Business Ethics. After extensive experience in management consulting (Gemini Consulting) and in different leadership positions in investment banking (Credit Suisse, Goldman Sachs), she founded her own firm, Nagel & Company, a management consultancy focusing on her new approach to behavioural strategy based on psychodynamic strategy development and the respective change processes. Claudia has worked and studied in New York, London, Paris, and Germany.

Mario Perini, MD, director of IL NODO Group, and scientific advisor of the Italian group relations conferences programme, is a psychiatrist, a psychoanalyst, and an organisational consultant, a member of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society, International Psycho-Analytic Association, and the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations. He works as a consultant in the public, private, and voluntary sectors, and is a trainer for professional and management education, a group supervisor, a psychotherapist, and a personal coach. Professor of group and organisational dynamics at the postgraduate school of health psychology, Turin University, he published the book *L'organizzazione nascosta* (*The Hidden Organization*, FrancoAngeli, 2007)

and co-edited, with Halina Brunning, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on a Turbulent World* (Karnac Books, 2010).

Bob Schoultz graduated from Stanford University in 1974 with a BA in philosophy, and was commissioned an ensign in the US Navy. He served as a Naval Special Warfare (SEAL) officer for the next thirty years and commanded Navy SEALs in multiple capacities all over the world. During his career, he graduated with highest distinction from the Naval War College, and taught there for two years. He concluded his Navy career by directing the character and leadership programs at the Naval Academy, retiring as a captain in July, 2005. He then served as the director of the Master of Science in Global Leadership program at the University of San Diego until November 2011. He is currently a speaker, consultant, and coach for Fifth Factor Leadership.

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Mark Stein is professor and chair in leadership and management at the University of Leicester. Previously, Mark has been a senior lecturer at Imperial College London, a research fellow at the London School of Economics and Brunel University, and a researcher and consultant at the Tavistock Institute. Mark has received an Emerald Citation of Excellence; the Richard Normann Prize; and the “Group & Organization Management” best paper prize. In June 2012 Mark also received the iLab prize for innovative scholarship for the paper published in this volume. The iLab prize—a diploma and 12,000 Swiss Francs—is co-sponsored by the European Academy of Management (EURAM) and the Swiss-based Imagination Foundation Laboratory.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Halina Brunning

London, June 2011, the Proms¹ season is in full swing.

The Royal Albert Hall is full tonight, no seats available for those still outside, queuing in vain for some cancellations.

Anxious anticipation of a five thousand-strong audience still noisy but now seated in this famously elegant, tiered hall.

The lights change, no longer exposing the audience to itself, instead, illuminating some aspects of the stage.

A single beam of light, a single person walks onto the stage.

Tumultuous applause.

The long-awaited virtuoso soloist has arrived.

As the applause reluctantly dies down, a moment of tense silence on both sides.

The soloist stands still as if affixed to the stage.

He looks at us, the instrument suspended, untuned.

The audience looks down at this speck of a human being standing below.

Both sides of this great divide are transfixed and mesmerised by each other. Anxiety and anticipation rises in both.

Then, unexpectedly, and rather irritatingly, he speaks.

He should not be allowed to use his own voice but speak to us only through his instrument.

Yet he says: "It is kind of lonely and scary down here".

A few hesitant bursts of laughter from the audience.

The magic of the moment is gone.

Roles are being taken up now, as they were intended, no longer exchanged and mixed up.

The concert begins as planned.

I was there too. The lucky one who had purchased a ticket in advance, the one who was sitting comfortably. I arrived ready to hear the music but was not prepared for this moment of epiphany which came to me as I also partook in this sheer and naked exchange of power and vulnerability.

In the slow, exciting moment of exchange that I witnessed between him, the soloist, and us, the audience, this book was born.

We, the audience, were hungry to be fed, powerful in our expectations, and critical in our appraisal, yet profoundly dependent on the magical power of the soloist whom we had chosen above other musicians to see and to hear, to eat, to devour or to spit out. He, the famous, the illusive one, no longer freely available to us here, as he now lives, treacherously, outside the UK, having eschewed the status bestowed upon him as our local hero.

He had the power to hypnotise us. We had the power to destroy him. Which was it to be? He must not disappoint us, as this would not be forgiven. But more than that, we needed him to be powerful, to give us what we came here to experience, to transport us, to transcend our senses, to create unique magic, just for us, just for me!

Yes, we wanted him to be more powerful than us, but our powerful expectations robbed him momentarily of his own powers and denuded him, exposing his own human frailty and vulnerability. But we did not want a vulnerable soloist! We wanted a demigod, perfect, strong, magical, powerful. He must give us everything! Suddenly we, the audience, became vulnerable. Vulnerable lest we destroyed him and robbed him of his stage presence, vulnerable to our own disappointment, to anger, rage, and frustration. No, we needed to give him a little more in order to get a lot more from him ...

Before the first pitch-perfect piece was over I knew that this was a special moment for me. He delivered, he fed me, individually, uniquely,

just as I hoped. But he gave me more, much more. In that moment I saw what I had never seen before: the slowly unfolding *anatomy of exchange*. Exchange between power and vulnerability, between a crowd and an idealised individual.

I also sensed that what was being re-enacted between audience and soloist was far from being unique; in fact it was universal! Except, that I had never witnessed it unfolding between two parties quite as clearly as I did that night.

The universality of power and vulnerability? The pairing of this interconnection, this interdependency, this interlocking, interacting of the giving, the rejecting, the hoping, the refusing, the wanting, the withholding; this tight dramatic pairing, this dynamic dance!

By the time the concert was over, I had a clear image of my new book in my head. I imagined a book on this precise subject of the interconnection, interdependency, and interlocking of power and vulnerability. Such a book needed to be produced as a fitting closure to the trilogy.² The inspiration for the previous two volumes had arrived to me fully formed in a dream; this time it was the concert that offered inspiration and suggested the format for the final book.

Why produce a trilogy?

Although it was never my intention to create a trilogy as such, having produced the first and then the subsequent volume on the theme of the psychoanalytic frame as a methodology for explaining complex global phenomena, I felt that the work was not complete until there was a third and final volume to link the books together. This moment has now been reached.

The overall purpose of the first volume (Bunning & Perini, 2010) was to offer a psychoanalytic frame for understanding the dramatic and often inexplicable world phenomena that are troubling in nature, irrational, but also global in their impact. We focused on wars, persistent conflicts, terrorism, the global financial crisis, and the yearning for a containing leadership at a time when our psychic containers have all but disappeared. These themes formed the connective tissue of the first volume.

The second volume (Bunning, 2011) spelled out an overwhelming social and individual anxiety arising from the fast-changing organisational patterns, the murderous attacks of organisations upon each other

in the merging process, the attacks of the customer upon the worker, or, when all else fails, the attack of the executives upon their own self and body, otherwise known as “burnout”.

Themes of money, fashion, the internet, and insurance may appear superficial at first, yet what connects them under the surface is a narcissistic, omnipotent defence. Such a defence is methodically used in the fight against overwhelming existential anxiety, attesting to our desperate attempts to make sense of the world that is threatening to disintegrate, become meaningless, disconnected, and overwhelming. This was the main focus of the second volume.

This current and last volume closes the trilogy with a proposal that intends to demonstrate how the pairing of power with vulnerability, derived from the earliest mother/child interaction, forms a stable recurrent structure for all subsequent interactions, regardless of the identity of the actors involved. Whether it is the interaction amongst board members, between a care-giving organisation and its needy clients, the consultant and his client, the police and citizens at times of unrest, in an entire country, an entire continent, or even in the globalised world of finance, the same DNA of power and vulnerability can be detected.

Perhaps the pairing of power with vulnerability, or better still, vulnerability with power, exists in the animal kingdom and throughout nature in general. I have in mind vulnerable plants and animals that, in order to survive and thrive, need to find powerful adaptive mechanisms with which to respond to and manage adverse environmental conditions, and thus ensure individual, and, importantly, species survival. Could it be that responding with a powerful mechanism to a sense of vulnerability is perhaps an omnipresent response of any living organism, some kind of yin and yang of nature?

On the other hand, if we think of those moments of human life which are seen as the most powerful—such as the very point of conception, pregnancy, giving birth, facing death—each of these milestones, life’s defining episodes, combine elements of power with the utmost vulnerability. Furthermore, we, the newborn, arrive powerfully propelled into this world, but as we are being born, we face one of the greatest challenges to our very existence.

Our social system is also constructed on the assumed pairing of power with vulnerability. Individually and collectively, power can be used as a defence against a sense of vulnerability; power without

vulnerability can lead to abuses, and vulnerability without any power can result in an ineffectual positioning and failure both at an individual and organisational level. So the two aspects are interdependent on each other and also intertwined with all aspects of life.

Small children long ago invented the simplest of games that illustrates this better than I could ever do with words alone. The game is called “Scissors Paper Stone”. The essence of this game is to win over the other object by a quick, sure-handed destructive act, such as scissors cutting paper. But this win is just a momentary one, as the next interaction will destroy the scissors the moment it encounters a stone, which in the next act will itself be destroyed, engulfed by paper. Therefore, the relativity of power and vulnerability accompanies us from our earliest childhood, is re-enacted in our childish games, and reminds us of the relative, relational, and momentary nature of our interaction with each other.

To bring this point into clear focus the illustration on the cover design of this book, and the vignettes that separate the three parts of the book, feature the three elements of this famous childhood game: “Paper Stone Scissors”.

The book is subdivided into three separate yet interconnected parts as the volume moves developmentally into an ever bigger arena: from the dyadic mother–baby interaction, through the organisational environments, through the political arena, into the stage of global finance.

Acknowledgements and personal thanks

In order to explore these themes I have invited seventeen academics, researchers, well known celebrated authors, and experienced practitioners of psychoanalysis and related fields of psychology to offer their thinking and to share some conclusions in this volume.

Once more, this virtual team of writers—my colleagues from ISPSO³ and OPUS⁴—resides in the UK, Germany, Italy, Poland, Norway, and the US. They have offered their creativity and insights to this book and I am most grateful to them all, not just for what they have written but also for the enthusiasm with which they engaged with me and with this project.

In particular, I wish to thank Mario Perini for co-editing the first volume with me and for contributing three important and original papers to the trilogy.

I also wanted to thank Olya Khaleelee and Jim Krantz for acting as an impromptu reflective team to me, my private “book ends” keeping “the container” safe and generative, the role they both graciously accepted thrice and fulfilled with warmth, wisdom, and loyalty.

Overall, forty-five authors have contributed to this project; some writers have offered their contributions to two or all three of the volumes. All three books were created virtually, across several countries and continents, with individual chapters translated into English from a number of European languages. It is clear, though amazing to know and important to appreciate, that the process of inviting, contracting, eliciting, shaping, editing, and agreeing the final version of each of the thirty-four chapters went remarkably quickly and smoothly, at least from my own position as overall editor. From the moment the first book was commissioned by Karnac in 2008 to the final volume going to production in April 2013, not once did we meet as a group in any of the aforementioned constellations. Yet, there was a sense of continuity, connection to the project, and a seamless creative process at work. My hypothesis is that authors who contributed their thinking and writing felt that they were part-taking in co-creation and enrichment of a methodology of some importance to our field. There was definitely a shared enthusiasm for the project and this helped to bring it to a speedy and timely conclusion.

I also wanted to thank members of my own family for the different roles they each played in this book: my brother Krzysztof for his ongoing artistic advice and illustrations, including the current cover design; my son Simon for looking after the technical aspects of production; my son Daniel for allowing me to use his original photographs in the second volume.

Sadly, my husband Robert was no longer here to cast his watchful eye over the vagaries of my English grammar as he always did in the past.

Unsurprisingly, whilst working on this last project, I also struggled with my own personal sense of powerfulness—powerlessness and vulnerability, as they rhythmically, unpredictably, and interchangeably held me in their grip.

I also wanted to thank my cat Rosie for sitting with me whilst I was working on the manuscript and for sitting *on* the manuscript whenever I stopped working.

Finally, even the three dedications to the three volumes spoke *volumes* to me. Looking at all three of them I can see that the first book was dedicated to my parents; the middle book to my husband, who died a week before the book was published; whilst the current book is being dedicated to my children and grandchildren—in other words, to the next generations. This reminds me of an elegant paper by William Halton (2004) on the origins of creativity and generativity and how they are linked to the passage of time and to the overall task.

To end on the hope of a different commentary

The book is out now. This title is but one of eighty or so books that Karnac produces every year and one of several thousands, if not millions, of books produced and sold worldwide.

This book has to transcend our obvious love for it, our attachment to it, and our belief in it. It has to survive and stand alone in this turbulent world, independently of us as the loving parents who conceived it and away from the supportive extended family network that we might have created around it.

I hope that I am speaking on behalf of all of us involved in this project when I say that it remains our humble hope that our collective wisdom might be noted and understood by those who are struggling to find some solution to persistent troubling world problems. If not able to provide solutions, we have done all we can to create a framework for thinking, explaining, and for understanding the *difficult-to-understand* ...

Let me end by paraphrasing Anton Obholzer's private communication (2010) noticing that the psychoanalysts who contributed to these three books indeed leant out of their consulting room windows, but what they saw out there was not the rose gardens of Hampstead ...

Notes

1. The Proms, more formally known as The BBC Proms, or The Henry Wood Promenade Concerts presented by the BBC, is an eight-week summer season of daily *orchestral classical music* concerts and other events held annually, predominantly in the *Royal Albert Hall* in London.
2. The trilogy is created by connecting three books into a linked series: *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on a Turbulent World* by Brunning and Perini (2010), *Psychoanalytic Reflections on a Changing World* by Brunning (2011),

and the current one, *Psychoanalytic Essays on Power and Vulnerability* by Brunning (2013). All published by Karnac Books.

3. ISPSO—International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organisations.
4. OPUS—Organisation for Promoting Understanding in Society.

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INTRODUCTION

Olya Khaleelee

This fascinating book, the last in a trilogy on psychoanalytic reflections, edited by Halina Brunning, explores power and vulnerability in three related areas: leadership and organisations, the political arena, and global finances. These thirteen essays, with a conclusion to the trilogy written by Jim Krantz, link psychoanalytic concepts with systems psychodynamics. This provides a powerful way of analysing and understanding how the inner world of the individual is mobilised in relation to the group, the organisation, society, and globally, from the perspective of the close interconnection between power and vulnerability.

Normally these concepts and experiences are split from one another, each part denying the other. Two of our writers, Ross Lazar and Bob Schoultz, draw on the story of the archetypal warrior hero, Achilles, from which the “Achilles heel” gave us “the most powerful metaphor for the inevitable vulnerability of the apparently invulnerable” (Lazar). As I write, current news headlines are about Oscar Pistorius, known as the “Blade Runner”—a man without lower limbs who surpassed the odds in athleticism by winning medals for running at the 2012 Paralympics—now suddenly a fallen hero, accused of murder. In the blink of an eye, things turn on their head and the apparently omnipotent become extremely vulnerable, a reminder of the biblical

quotation “How are the mighty fallen” (The Bible, II Samuel, Ch. 1, v.19).

Writing about this event, a disabled journalist said: “Even his name had a magic about it. Pistorius. It spoke of pistons and power, it hinted of grandeur and Roman emperors ... In an era of brittle body fascism, of botox, false beauty, denial of age and obsession with appearance, Pistorius possessed a kind of fierce purity” (Melanie Reid in *The Times*, 16 February 2013).

The papers in this volume describe how power and vulnerability are closely interlinked with infantile omnipotence and helplessness. According to Klein, the early stages of infancy are characterised by omnipotent thoughts, feelings, and phantasies. The importance of omnipotence was also linked to fears of an omnipotent destructiveness which “have profound and permanent effects on the development of the ego ...” (*Dictionary of Kleinian Thought*, ed. R. D. Hinshelwood, p. 370, Free Association Books, 1989). Renate Grønvold Bugge’s brilliant and poignant paper on her experience of being in a consulting role to governmental and others institutions in the aftermath of Breivik’s massacre of sixty-nine young people on the island of Utøya in Norway in 2012, is an excellent example of how such omnipotence might find expression in a destructive application.

As Klein describes it, in normal development, the movement out of this sense of omnipotence comes about through the experience of helplessness, a state of vulnerability that is sensitively mediated through the primary caregiver. When carried out in a compassionate and empathetic way, this enables the infant gradually to recognise the reality of “objects” in their own right, and to bear the fact that they are separate and not under the infant’s control. Where this normal development fails, omnipotent defences can lead to an enduring state of narcissism, whereby the independence of objects is denied. For the infant in this state, therefore, others exist only by virtue of their function and usefulness for the self, that is to say, not as separate and independent beings. This narcissistic state lessens experiences of envy, hostility, and vulnerability.

Mario Perini explores how this destructive envy can poison the workplace. He draws on Aristotle who “defined envy as the pain caused by the good fortune of others”, representing “a real narcissistic wound”. He explores the poisoning quality of envy and how it relates to narcissistic vulnerability, with a focus on the impact upon group and organisational

dynamics and the workplace climate. What is so interesting about this paper is the denial that permeates the system. Perhaps the link is that envy and a sense of inferiority are closely related, and to admit to feeling inferior would render the individual too vulnerable. The toxicity therefore “goes unrecognised, undervalued or attributed to other sources, often masquerading as a legitimate ‘constructive criticism’”.

Approaching this denial from another angle, Claudia Nagel looks specifically at what happens in the boardroom, at how power and vulnerability reflect two sides of the same coin. Through this close association, she demonstrates how the acknowledgement of the underlying fear and anxiety is resisted and rejected. Nagel links this to the upbringing and socialisation of the male child, and how fear is controlled and denied, so that bravery and heroism may flourish. She applies this to boardroom behaviour in the face of organisational change, where “strategic decisions of the management board always take place under the insecurity of the future”. Typical of corporate life, to speak of anxiety or fear is taboo, but “concerns” are allowed. Fear deriving from vulnerability is therefore endemic in strategic planning, and coping with this will depend on the quality of the leadership available.

Ross Lazar, in the first paper of this volume and of the section on leadership and organisations, also draws our attention to the boardroom and, through an in-depth analysis, clearly demonstrates how psychic development impacts on leadership and management. He emphasises that effective leadership has to derive from the leader’s emotional intelligence and awareness of his own vulnerability, together with his capacity to receive the unwanted negative feelings and projections of others. This awareness and experience, evidence of maturity, enables the leader in turn to influence the feelings and behaviour of followers. This leadership capacity requires great inner strength and resilience, which relates to personality development. He links this leadership capacity to attachment theory and Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development. Imbedded in this description are crucially important questions of basic trust, for oneself and for others. In so doing, Lazar shows the reader how personality development impacts on management and leadership ability for good or for ill.

This issue of trust is a connecting theme in several of the papers in this volume. In some it arises in relation to the development of basic trust in infancy which underpins the personality of the resilient and mature leader. In other papers it is to do with what happens to trust

in and for our institutions, which also function as containers for other feelings, such as anxiety and aggression.

In “Who is the boss?” by Francesca Cardona, trust is a key element in the interpersonal relationship between client and consultant. She explores how power and vulnerability play out in the client–consultant relationship and the transference elements that are enacted between them. She also links this dynamic to issues of interdependency and the risk of collusion, and brings in the very important, often unacknowledged, element of shame: “the shame of needing help, being seen as vulnerable, incompetent or ineffective”.

Vulnerability is explored in a different way by Tim Dartington in an excellent paper on the dynamics that may develop in the care relationship, particularly in relation to those with dementia. Here the split between vulnerability and power is such that the care relationship can and does become toxic and abusive. He relates how the fear of dependency and helplessness is so powerful that it leads to inhuman, sadistic behaviour between caregiver and patient.

Underlying this dynamic is the denial of death and dying which Dartington explores in relation to aggression and the death instinct. And, of course, the terror of madness associated with being contaminated by the vulnerability of dementia, which mobilises hate, and in turn, a cruelly aggressive response. Like Perini, he relates it to toxicity, not from the perspective of envy, but drawing on Stein’s description of the toxic experience of employees in relation to customers (Stein, 2007, Toxicity and the unconscious experience of the body at the employee–customer interface. *Organization Studies*, 28(08), 1223–1241. Reprinted in: H. Brunning (Ed.), *Psychoanalytic Reflections on a Changing World*. Karnac: London). Several of these writers, including Cardona, Nagel, and Dartington, offer creative suggestions about how to contain such feelings and manage this dynamic in a more effective and mature way.

The role of leader is analysed further in Elisabeth Henderson’s paper on inspirational leadership, which compares Hitler with Gandhi. The pungent subtitle of this paper—“Avoiding the corrosive power of corruption”—gives a glimpse of how, in a societal vacuum, such very different kinds of charismatic leadership might emerge, both mobilising potentially blind trust in the followers. Using Kleinian theory, the author compares the mature inclusivity of Gandhi’s “depressive position” leadership, embodying values of empowerment “Power-to”—, with the

more primitive splitting and exclusion embodied in Hitler's "paranoid-schizoid", authoritarian leadership of "Power-over".

Moving from the values embodied in the leadership role to cultural values, Schoultz uses the example of the US Navy SEALs to explore the tension between the professional "Ethos" of this group, and what he calls the "Mythos", that is fuelled by "the public appeal of the attractive, rebellious military hero, an image considerably reinforced by the media". Back to Achilles. He contrasts the sense of duty, group loyalty, and quiet professionalism of the SEAL role as embodied in the Ethos of the SEALs, with the more overtly heroic cult of the individual that feeds into the Mythos of the culture, one that is augmented by the invitation to celebrity. As I write, the *Times* headline is: "'That's him. Boom, done!' Navy SEAL tells how he shot bin Laden". (*The Times* 12 February 2013). Here the emphasis is on power and invulnerability, but with a warning that the vulnerability beneath the "surface of strength, military competence and overt power" should not be ignored, lest the entire culture be placed at risk.

Taking an even broader psychoanalytic perspective on power and vulnerability, Howard Schwartz and Andreas Liefoghe offer an analysis of the British riots of 2011. They use Freudian theory, both as applied to oedipal dynamics and in wider society, to examine how paternal authority as a source of maintaining social order, has been attacked and either destroyed, or castrated through political correctness. The loss of this authority and the trust normally invested in such authority, has released the underlying aggression and rage that Freud described so well in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930), which is always beneath the surface. The authors describe an anti-oedipal dynamic through which the paternal couple are split by societal dynamics, and by labelling paternal authority as oppressive and corrupt they demonstrate how this could be seen as giving legitimacy to the rioters' actions. They link this with the hesitancy of the police in taking action to restore order, a hesitancy driven by a politically correct desire not to be perceived as racist.

This is a fascinating analysis of power and vulnerability at a societal level but it also points to the importance of trust in parental symbols and the containment of powerful feelings, as described in Bion's theory of thinking as elaborated in Lazar's paper. The relevance to the riots of 2011 is that they took place just after schools and colleges were on vacation and the government was in recess. This may have been

experienced at a system psychodynamic level as failed dependency, certainly as a withdrawal of significant authority figures. The loss of containing institutional boundaries that could have “held” the underlying aggression might thus well have contributed to the events of those hot nights.

More vulnerability than power is explored in a rich paper about Poland by Sylwia Cichowska and Rafał Chichowski. They offer a fascinating account of the history of Poland, a “country balancing between existence and nonexistence”, buffeted, tricked, and betrayed, squeezed between East and West, and, not surprisingly, exhibiting all the characteristics of a dependent borderline personality. The authors explore whether, and how, Poland is now in a position to reduce its vulnerability by developing a stronger sense of its own identity.

The final section of this volume, which takes an even wider perspective, examines the power and vulnerability of global finances, an area of preoccupation that has dominated economic thinking and the lives of citizens in many different countries since the financial crisis of 2008. Richard Morgan-Jones explores two hypotheses in his thought-provoking paper on the vulnerability of the nation state and its citizens in Europe. The first is to suggest that the way in which the current economic crisis is being dealt with re-evokes humiliation trauma deriving from “undigested experiences of twentieth-century dictatorship and humiliating shame ...”.

The second, and related, hypothesis suggests that in the wake of a powerful explicit desire to remain at peace in Europe—a desire that the formation of the EU concretised—the underlying, unresolved feelings have, instead, given rise to economic warfare. He draws on Vamik Volkan’s theory that collective traumatic humiliation creates “narcissistic damage and a resulting sense of ruthless entitlement”. The suggestion is that what is happening today economically is an unconscious repetition, resulting from the humiliation and shaming that took place several decades ago, particularly in Germany, Italy, and Eastern Europe.

Andrzej Leder’s refreshing and enlightening paper looks at the economic crisis from the perspective of the power and vulnerability of trust, particularly in relation to the pressure that exists by virtue of the need to invest surplus money and deal with the attendant risks. He describes how “trust is today a fundamental factor in determining the balance of power in the globalised world”, and especially trust

in symbols that are perceived to have an enduring quality and which therefore offer security.

He offers a fascinating analysis of how these symbols, particularly American symbols of financial order, have fed into a powerful sense of dependency and trust which ignored the clearly excessive borrowing that had been taking place for years. The idea that financial operations could be risk free and “Well, whoever goes bankrupt, it will certainly not be Lehman Brothers!”, was a clear expression of a loss of reality testing. Furthermore, despite what has happened, he points to the strength and durability of American symbols of financial security and suggests that the West and the USA continue to be symbolically powerful because, looking at the situation globally, no other reliable trustworthy container for these feelings exists.

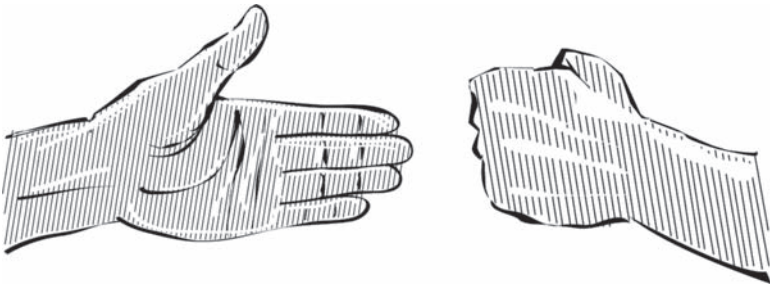
The final paper of the last section is by Mark Stein who offers a comprehensive global systemic analysis of the incubation of the 2008 credit crisis and the cultural conditions that gave rise to it. In this brilliant paper, Stein presents a theoretical framework suggesting that in the twenty years preceding the crisis, a manic culture of denial, omnipotence, triumphalism, and over-activity developed in the West. He argues that because of this manic and triumphant state of mind—a reaction to the collapse of communism—threats to the financial system and opportunities to take preventive action were ignored or denied. This cultural state of mind set in place the conditions for the credit crisis, from which the majority of citizens of Europe now suffer the consequences.

Finally, Jim Krantz produces a thought-provoking conclusion to this trilogy, pointing to how “these volumes highlight a set of paradoxes and contradictions that must be held rather than resolved. This ‘holding’ amounts to creating a container within which thinking might take place. Where the space cannot be held, we see another thread that ties the essays together: dysfunction, violence, deadness, and destructiveness ensue.”

*This book is dedicated to the next generations
To my children and grandchildren
with much love*

PART I

POWER AND VULNERABILITY IN LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONS



CHAPTER ONE

The relevance of early development to the psychodynamics of power and vulnerability

Ross A. Lazar

Introduction

According to the heroic ideal, and certainly since the figure of Achilles appeared, heroism has always been associated with invulnerability. But it was that very same Greek hero whose “Achilles heel” gave us the most powerful metaphor for the inevitable vulnerability of the apparently invulnerable. Thus the myth of invulnerability, of invincibility, of unconquerability, that is, of omnipotent indefatigability, carried with it its own contradiction, its own renunciation right from the start. Whether we think of the Greek Gods, the Greek heroes, the Samurai, the German mythological figure Siegfried, or comic book figures such as Superman, the Hulk, Batman, or Spiderman—or even real, existing persons (such as the Navy SEALs, for instance, see Chapter Eight)—the fantasy that there should exist such a creature, whether human or superhuman, is a *topos* which exists in every culture, and which in Jungian terms belongs to the realm of the archetype.

Equally, the ideas, fantasies, and myths surrounding power and powerfulness also partake of this yearning for omnipotence. Growing up as a young boy in the USA, one of my favourite American myths was the folktale of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox. Paul, who was portrayed

as a giant, stood somewhere between eight and twenty-nine meters tall (twenty-nine axe-handles high) and weighed at least 300 pounds. At birth it took five storks to carry him, and he was renowned for digging the Grand Canyon by dragging his axe behind him, creating Mount Hood by piling up rocks to put his campfire out, and creating the Great Lakes as a watering hole so that his huge companion, Babe the Blue Ox, could get enough to drink. But heroes, their heroic feats and their heroic powerfulness, whether mythical or real, also must be seen to be vulnerable, must have an "Achilles heel" so that we mere mortals have at least a slight chance of identifying ourselves with them. Being aware as we are, at least subconsciously, of our own mortality and vulnerability, we need our all-powerful heroes to have at least one weak spot where they prove to be vulnerable, imperfect, incomplete, and non-omnipotent. So, with these pictures in mind, let us now turn to the developmental issues involved in dealing with one's own vulnerability and handling one's own powerfulness.

*Baby's vulnerability/baby's power—
adult vulnerability/adult power?*

Vulnerability is a characteristic easily and accurately applied to babies. Babies are so helpless, so dependent on their caretakers for food, shelter, warmth, attention, admiration, and love. As many different types of experiments have proven, babies cannot do without the presence of what Donald Winnicott referred to as the "environment mother" in order to grow and to thrive, and through whom they learn and develop in order to evolve into ever more mature, more independent but also more dependable persons. Does it not therefore stand to reason that people in responsible positions in their organisations, as well as in their families, are equally vulnerable, equally dependent upon "significant others" in order to sustain themselves adequately, and thus better withstand the stresses and strains of organisational life without succumbing to its "toxicity"?

But not to forget ... babies are strong! Babies are powerful! Babies exert enormous influence on their environment from early on ... starting indeed before they are even born! By the time they are only a few prenatal months old, they are insistent in making themselves felt, and in that sense making themselves known. They kick, they disturb mother's digestion, her ability to sleep, her ability to move about. They

dictate her diet, her need for sleep, for fresh air, for exercise and rest, and, moreover, her emotional and mental states. Our knowledge of what babies experience *in utero* is, of course, still very limited, although continually growing. But without falling into the trap of anthropomorphic thinking, it is safe to say that babies do begin to have experiences of life in the womb from early on (tactile, kinesthetic, auditory, etc.) and that these experiences influence who they are and who they become, probably in ways far more profound than we yet know about or perhaps even can imagine.

Thus it follows that baby's vulnerability is in itself the most powerful survival mechanism, as the evidence of its vulnerability, the smallness, the sweetness, the big eyes in the round face, all reflect the utter dependency and immaturity vis-à-vis the world can and, for the most part, do evoke the necessary care-giving responses from the baby's environment which serves as its guarantee of life.

Furthermore, as our infantile vulnerability has a profound influence on our vulnerability as adults, it must also follow that our initial experiences of strength, of power and influence on our environment, also colour the way we relate to those dimensions of life later on. Although this statement may sound banal and self-evident, its consequences are not to be underestimated, even recognising the fact that many further, equally important, phases of development follow, which, in turn, shape who we are and who we become throughout our entire life cycle.

A newborn baby, merely through the very act of coming into the family, has the power to immediately influence and change the environment in many significant ways. Indeed, one could argue that they "manage" the situation from day one and are "in command" of a myriad of roles and behaviours. For not only do they determine sleeping and waking patterns, times and content of meals, who goes where and when, etc.—they are even capable of changing everyone's name! No longer George or Fred, but Dad; no longer Sally or Mary, but Mum; no longer Daniel, but brother; no longer Kathy, but sister!

Nature and/or nurture? Becoming who one is!

But let us return to our earliest days, weeks, and months as an infant, and to the formation of the inbuilt equipment which we all bring with us and with which we form our very first relationships. Much has been studied and written about this early period of our lives and, as in all

scientific endeavours, there are many different points of view and much dissent. What by now is clear to all, however, is that the old theories of babies being a kind of *tabula rasa*, a clean slate upon which anything and everything could be projected, is simply not true. Already at conception, and certainly after nine months gestation, we arrive at birth not only equipped with an elaborate and ancient phylogenetic heritage, but a wealth of individual experience gleaned from our time in the womb—for no two wombs and no two babies are alike.

We emerge from that fully protected, 100 per cent caring environment equipped not only with a panoply of reflexive responses, but also “pre-programmed” to breathe, eat, sleep, defecate, make ourselves noticed, heard, paid attention to, and related to as a lively, communicative individual. Through every one of our individual genetic codes, we are pre-formed to a certain extent, bodily, but also mentally, to become the person we are. For, according to Wilfred Bion, we possess a “character” or “personality” right from birth, indeed, most likely, even before. And, not only do we possess this personality but, again according to Bion, it is that aspect of ourselves which confronts us with the fact that ... “the earliest problems demanding solution are related to a link between two personalities” (Bion, 1965, p. 66).

It is this fact, the ultimate centrality of relationships and relatedness to others of our species, which at one and the same time makes us human and causes us as human beings the most “problems demanding solution”. The relevance of this basic fact of existence to our double theme of vulnerability and power is self-evident. Only through our relationships with one another are we confronted both with the fact of our vulnerability and our needs and with possibilities for exercising power over our environment. So let us now go on to consider the vicissitudes of human relations in regard to these two dynamic dimensions, both in their inception and as they apply to the different roles in which we find ourselves throughout life.

Relationships: Adam and Eve—Cain and Abel

The relationship of one human being to another has occupied us literally since Adam and Eve. Their relationship, we are told, was characterised by a certain fundamental disagreement and caused them the very first marital strife of all time. But there was more to it than that. After all, they did have two sons, Cain and Abel, even though we have

no further information about their relationship as a couple, or their parenting skills, that is, about how they related to their children and how the children then learned to relate to one another.

Since the outcome of the brothers' relationship unfortunately ended in the one murdering the other, there was presumably something essentially lacking in the parents' ability to bring up their children in a "civilised" way and to teach them to manage both their vulnerability and their quest for power more humanely. As Adam and Eve experienced no parenting whatsoever, where "on earth" were they supposed to have gathered the experience and the knowledge necessary to be able to have done so? Evidently, that knowledge doesn't just "grow on trees!" So, how then do we learn to relate to one another so that we manage at the very least to survive, and at best even learn to thrive together and prosper, rather than doing one another in?

Again, science as well as religion and philosophy have attempted to answer these questions for a very long time and again have come up with a myriad of answers. Even within the disciplines of psychodynamic psychology and psychoanalysis there are many and varied approaches to the problem. Those that, to my mind, seem most convincing and useful are Bion's "container-contained" approach, and that of "attachment theory" as developed by John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, and others, with important additions and contributions by Erik Erikson and D. W. Winnicott. Let me sketch the main points of each with particular reference to our central theme.

W. R. Bion's theory of thinking: "container-contained"

Although originally derived from his work with psychotic patients, whose inability to think properly, or even to think at all, gave Bion the impetus for these ideas, the result turned out to be a generalised theory of the development of thought—emotionally influenced thought—from its original inception in the relationship between mother and baby to maturity in the adult mind. That is to say, its assertions reach far beyond the parameters of developmental pathology, providing us instead with a universal model of mental/emotional development based on that primary mother-child relationship.

Put simply, the model states that a baby who is in need, in distress, or even panic, has an inbuilt propensity to project that need, distress, or panic into its caretaker, or anyone else for that matter who might be

in range, that is, might be capable of receiving such projections. This propensity, discovered by Melanie Klein (1946) and dubbed “projective identification” is meant to provide the baby (patient, client, colleague, etc.) with some immediate, yet in the end only temporary, relief from the emotional burden under which it is suffering at the moment. Needing to give a name to “that which gets projected”, Bion dubbed them “beta-elements” and defined them as “things-in-themselves” which are “only suitable for expulsion” (Bion, 1992, p. 181). However, this is only step one of the process.

Step two, Bion tells us, requires the receptivity of the “object” (mother or other caretaker, partner, therapist, coach, colleague, or superior, for instance) to be in a mental emotional state which he called “reverie”. This dreamlike state allows the emotional message of whatever it is that is being projected to impact upon that “Other”, ultimately enabling it to be thought about emotionally until the receptor of the projections can begin to make some sense of it. This process, to which Bion gave the name “alpha-function”, results in a kind of “dream work” which then produces what he called “alpha-elements”. These he then defined as dreamable dreams, thinkable thoughts, the “furniture”, the “building blocks”, so to speak, of what our dreams and ultimately our thoughts are made of.

In step three, these alpha elements are returned to the projecting subject in a “detoxified” form which the baby, client, colleague, or partner can hopefully then begin to use to “think for him- or herself”, not only benefitting from the relief and detoxification of its “poisonous” expulsions, but even more so, so the model claims, from the process itself. According to Bion, the projector can, through having experienced the thinking, feeling mind of the Other, now begin to introject this emotional thought process, to identify with it, and thus over time become more and more able to utilise it for oneself. (Bion, 1984; Lazar, 2000)

The implications of this model for leadership and management functions cannot be overemphasised. Indeed, for many, it has now become a paradigm of the mental attitude and psychic process in which leaders and managers need to engage, at least in part, if they are to communicate well with, listen to, understand, and thereby gain cooperation and true “followership” from their subordinates (Lazar, 2007).

Furthermore, its implications for issues of vulnerability and power are also of major significance. Without being able to be open enough, to allow oneself to be appropriately vulnerable for the reception of

unpleasant, unwanted projections, one cannot be in touch with them enough to receive and work on their needs. Without this knowledge and experience of the Other, one is powerless to influence his behaviour, his thinking, and his attitudes in a deep and convincing way. Conversely, using one's vulnerability to this end will add power and conviction to one's own attitudes, reactions, statements, and behaviour in role, therefore maximising one's interpersonal influence, putting one more in command of the situation and thus in a position to achieve better results.

This can, however, be understood to be a radical, and, for many, extremely risky, if not unacceptable, departure from current, established attitudes towards one's vulnerability as well as towards one's exercise of power. As it turns out, only the truly strong are really able and willing to admit and demonstrate their weakness and vulnerability, therefore putting them in the position to gain the added power and strength that comes from that admission. Those leaders and managers who are too afraid of their own vulnerability tend to mask it through demonstrations of "power" which don't ring true and are easily seen and felt by their colleagues to be what they are, that is, more a "whistling in the dark" than a true demonstration of strength.

Attachment theory

In addition to being able to "think emotionally" in order to be able to reflect about what transpires in oneself and others, another major developmental hurdle to be mastered deals with the complex realm of interpersonal relationships. Again, much has been thought and written about this key area of human life and again there are many different approaches to it. One particularly fruitful approach began in the 1930s, undertaken then, for the most part by Dr. John Bowlby and his American colleague Dr. Mary Ainsworth. Since then the study of human attachment patterns has been taken up by the field of human relations and related fields all over the world. Attachment theory's main thesis is that at the beginning of everyone's life "a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care, and pleasure" is formed. The roots of research on attachment began with Freud's theories about love, but Bowlby is credited as being the father of attachment theory as such (Bowlby, 1988).

Bowlby devoted extensive research to the concept of attachment, describing it as a “lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194). As a psychoanalyst, he shared the view that early experiences in childhood have an important influence on development and behaviour later in life, but added that early attachment styles are established in childhood through the infant/caregiver relationship, and that, in addition, their significance for the survival of the species was not to be underestimated. That is to say, he believed that attachment had an evolutionary component as an aid to survival. He states, “The propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals [is] a basic component of human nature” (Bowlby, 1988, p. 3). Clearly, the fact of our propensity to form such attachments, and to form them according to a particular pattern—evolved and established in early childhood, and repeated throughout our lives—is bound to have a major influence upon the kinds of relationships we make, not only privately, but also at work, and that, depending on their nature, they are bound to exert significant influence on our attitudes towards and ability to deal with both our vulnerable and our powerful aspects.

Characteristics of attachment

Attachment patterns shape one’s pattern of relating. Bowlby believed there to be four distinguishing characteristics of attachment:

Proximity maintenance: the desire to be near the people to whom we are attached.

Safe haven: returning to the attachment figure for comfort and safety in the face of a fear or threat.

Secure base: the attachment figure acts as a base of security from which the child can explore the surrounding environment.

Separation distress: anxiety that occurs in the absence of the attachment figure.

Most of the research on attachment applied to adult behaviour has been done in the realm of private, personal, intimate relations, not in work-related settings.

However, if attachment patterns, attachment style, and one’s ability to deal with anxiety and proximity in relationships is based on these patterns, as Bowlby submits, then they must be equally relevant for leaders and managers, particularly in today’s high-stress, high anxiety level working environments as well. Psychodynamically based

organisational observation demonstrates clearly, given the adjustments necessary when taking the differences in setting into account, how this is the case. (For examples of this see Hinshelwood and Skogstad, 2000)

While physical intimacy is generally taboo in the work setting, seeking out those colleagues with whom one feels most comfortable (proximity maintenance) is commonplace. Equally, when the atmosphere in the workplace becomes threatening, it is highly likely that one will seek out "a safe place to hide" (safe haven). Feeling relatively secure in one's job, one's role, and one's social status in an organisation, frees one up to be more adventurous, more daring in making changes, experimenting with new ideas and strategies, without having to fear for one's position, one's well being, or status (secure base). Finally, feeling too separate, too distanced from that secure base, for instance when having to negotiate on one's own in a more or less hostile and/or threatening environment, can lead to a variation of "separation distress" which can severely impact one's anxiety level and thereby negatively affect one's performance.

With the help of a matrix, adult attachment researchers such as Kim Bartholomew, Leonard Horowitz, and R. C. Fraley map adult attachment patterns according to the two main variables: anxiety and avoidance, as illustrated by the diagram below:

Again, it stands to reason that the dimensions measured by this means are highly relevant in the analysis and assessment of leadership and management styles. In addition, they most certainly play a major role, albeit for the most part unconsciously, in a person deciding what roles are most suitable, most appropriate for his or her particular attachment pattern. Here are two brief examples:

The head of a large children's home, himself a father of several children, placed himself in the "secure" quadrant characterised by low anxiety and low avoidance. Being himself a warm and friendly person, he has no trouble being appropriately "intimate" with his severely disturbed adolescent charges, and, due to their massive and otherwise unmet needs, in a way which they desperately crave.

In the second example, the head of a large children's psychiatric clinic, can be characterised as a somewhat insecure, anxious-avoidant type who is rarely present, who avoids all-too intimate contact with both patients and staff, and manages the distance between himself and his subordinates through hierarchical status rather than interpersonal interaction.

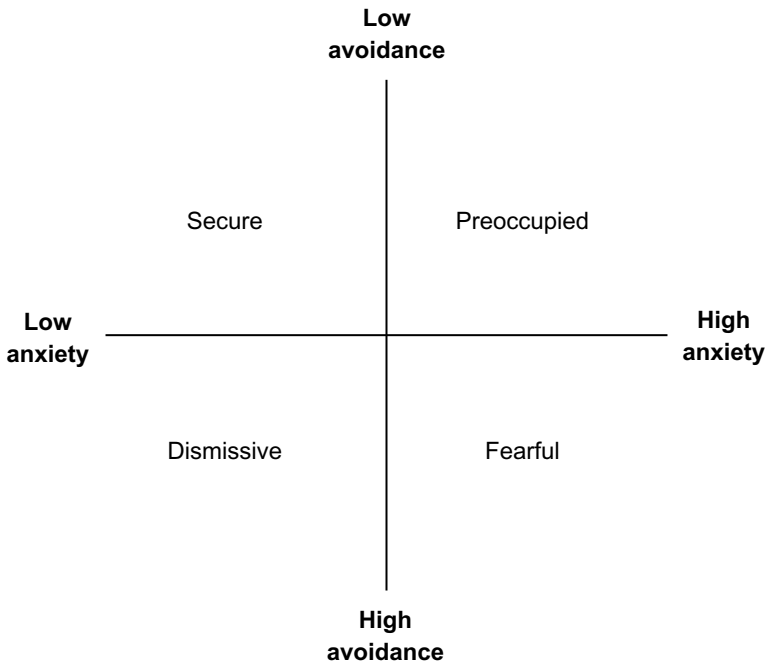


Figure 1. Attachment_measures.

Whether or not, or rather to what extent, these are attachment patterns developed in early childhood is difficult to say. But the fact that these patterns exist and shape and colour our interpersonal relationships cannot be denied. Equally, a pattern of relative secure attachment, relatively free of anxiety, is bound to produce a personality and behaviour far different from someone who is anxious-avoidant, insecure-avoidant, anxious-ambivalent or insecure-ambivalent in his or her basic attachment pattern. This in turn is bound to have a major impact on that person's ability to manage his own attitude to his vulnerability and his sense of power and/or powerlessness.

*Personality development and identity formation:
the development of the individual—Erik H. Erikson's stages
of psychosocial development*

So now that our baby-leader-manager has commenced learning to think emotionally, to relate to a primary caretaker, and has begun

developing his/her interpersonal relationship skills on the basis of his/her attachment pattern, what next?

In the 1950s the German-American pedagogue and psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson, pupil and later colleague of Anna Freud, developed a theory of personality development and identity formation which elaborated and departed somewhat from that of Sigmund Freud. In contrast to Freud's theory which was based on psychosexual stages of infantile development (oral, anal, genital), Erikson focuses on what he called psychosocial stages of interaction with one's environment. In particular, it focuses on those significant figures in that environment that have a major impact on that individual's development.

The eight developmental stages which he identified, displayed in the table below, was complemented by a ninth—"old age"—which his wife, Joan Erikson, later added.

The stages

Without going into detail about every stage, it should prove useful to our understanding of the dynamics of vulnerability and power to select those aspects of Erikson's ideas that have particular relevance to those dynamics and to comment on them.

The first of Erikson's dimensions—basic trust *vs.* mistrust—is, of course, crucial to development in general, and to the development of a capacity for leadership and the management of people in particular. People who have basic trust in themselves are automatically in a better position to trust others, to be trustworthy and to expect trustworthiness in others. A mistrustful person on the other hand, always suspicious of the other's possible ulterior motives, secret thoughts and plans, and possible disloyalty, will, of necessity, deal with his fellow workers in a different, rather more fearful, anxious, distrustful manner. Only people who have developed enough basic trust in themselves and their counterparts will be able to afford to risk being vulnerable and making that vulnerability public.

Equally, an essential feature of a successful leadership personality's capacity to exercise power relies on a feeling of autonomy, a feeling that "it is okay to be me". Someone who, instead, feels full of shame and doubt about their right to be who they are, will not, cannot adequately harness the power of their personality in role. Without the ability to feel it to be legitimate to initiate things and influence the course they

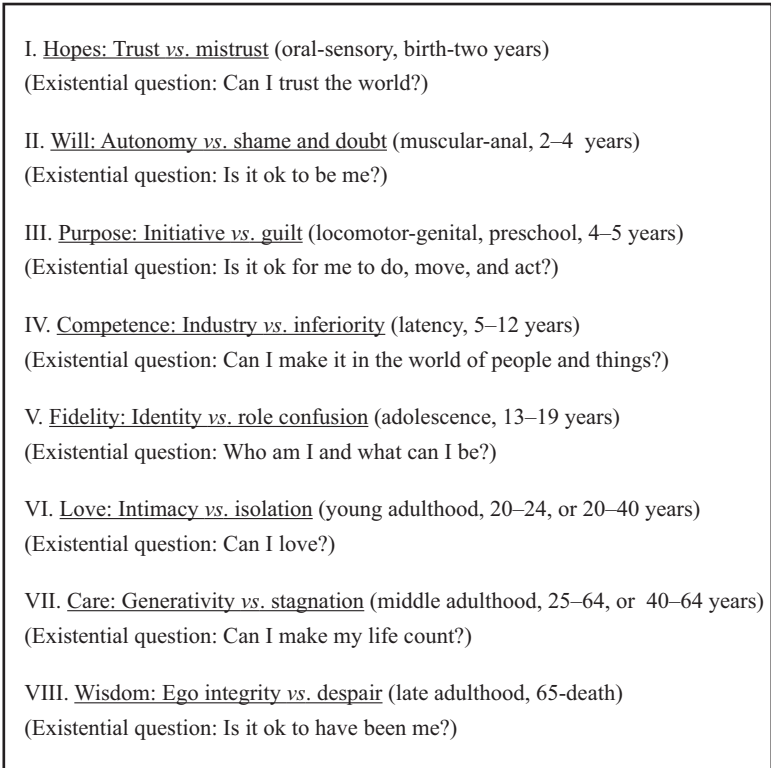
- 
- I. Hopes: Trust vs. mistrust (oral-sensory, birth-two years)
(Existential question: Can I trust the world?)
- II. Will: Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (muscular-anal, 2–4 years)
(Existential question: Is it ok to be me?)
- III. Purpose: Initiative vs. guilt (locomotor-genital, preschool, 4–5 years)
(Existential question: Is it ok for me to do, move, and act?)
- IV. Competence: Industry vs. inferiority (latency, 5–12 years)
(Existential question: Can I make it in the world of people and things?)
- V. Fidelity: Identity vs. role confusion (adolescence, 13–19 years)
(Existential question: Who am I and what can I be?)
- VI. Love: Intimacy vs. isolation (young adulthood, 20–24, or 20–40 years)
(Existential question: Can I love?)
- VII. Care: Generativity vs. stagnation (middle adulthood, 25–64, or 40–64 years)
(Existential question: Can I make my life count?)
- VIII. Wisdom: Ego integrity vs. despair (late adulthood, 65-death)
(Existential question: Is it ok to have been me?)

Figure 2. Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development.

follow, one clearly cannot lead and/or manage effectively. Tormented by feelings of guilt about one's potential initiatives makes it impossible to take those initiatives. Thus, one proves unable to influence the course of things and is consequently ineffective as a leader and/or manager. Without doubt, an industrious person is much more likely to succeed in a leadership/management role than someone whose sense of inferiority inhibits him from applying himself adequately to the job at hand. In addition, one might argue that the development of a clearly articulated identity is, quite possibly, the most important of all dimensions of personality development. Without it, without truly knowing who one is, one cannot begin to imagine who one might become, that is to say, what further developments and potentials might lay ahead. If, instead, one is plagued by role confusion, as many in leadership positions are, one

becomes vulnerable to the confusion and insecurity, the anxieties and doubts, of others; one loses the ability to define a clear approach to the problem at hand, therefore relinquishing the ability to intervene powerfully in pursuit of the task.

The latter three categories of Erikson's scheme refer to areas of life relating to qualities of mature development. The ability to share intimacy, feel generative (i.e., procreative), and possess integrity are characteristics of a well-developed, adult personality, freed from infantile neuroses, adolescent hang-ups, and immature attitudes. These, clearly, are most desirable characteristics for leaders and managers, even if it is somewhat illusory, even utopian, to expect to find them to be particularly widespread. Their opposites, according to Erikson are isolation, stagnation, and finally despair; they should truly disqualify any person from taking up such responsible roles, and, indeed, give concern for the welfare and well-being of such persons, although there is no way of guaranteeing that people like this are excluded from taking up such roles.

In summary, it is clear that the outcome of the psychosocial stages of development as put forward by Erikson all have a crucial role to play in one's attitude towards and ability to deal with one's feelings of, and tolerance of, vulnerability, as well as one's striving for or avoidance of power in leadership and/or management positions.

Let me again give two short examples from my consultancy practice to illustrate two extremes of personality development and their effect on the management of two professional organisations.

*From "bottom-up" to "top down" in a large
rehabilitation centre*

The ABC Workshops have, for many years, been offering handicapped adults the opportunity to both attend a productive workplace and receive social and occupational rehabilitation. Recently, under increasing pressure to become more profitable, the organisation appointed a new business manager, whose mandate was to improve sales, reduce production costs, and thus raise profitability as much as possible within the limitations dictated by the workforce, most of whom are chronically psychically ill.

Mr. Z., the new manager, while occasionally paying lip service to the dual tasks of the organisation (rehabilitation and profitability) had

clearly set as his singular primary task the improvement of the financial situation of the company, regardless of the costs to the workers and the professional team who support them. Originally conceived to be a grassroots, democratically run organisation, upon taking office, Mr. Z. declared that from now on it was to be run as a “top down” firm, in which he and he alone had the final say.

Characteristically, he exercised power by means of casting doubt about people’s motives and mistrusting them in general, shaming them in public, making them feel guilty for targets and goals not met, accusing them of inefficiency and even laziness. In this way, he isolated himself from the work force and spread feelings of despair rather than hope about the future of the organisation. The general impression amongst the workers was that Mr. Z. feared getting too close, both to the difficulties the handicapped workers have and to the demands of the professional staff. Their hypothesis was that he found it impossible to open himself, to allow himself to become vulnerable enough to be able to empathise with their situations, and therefore to understand them better. While one can easily imagine that it would make his job easier were he more in touch with their needs and strengths, evidently he felt that the threat to his authority was too great for him to risk that much intimacy.

*Competence and caring: saving an institution
from its own demise*

In contrast, the management style of Dr. M., the newly appointed director of a national centre for the further education of theologians and other church workers, was quite the opposite. Despite having inherited an extremely difficult internal situation, in which scandals were rampant and the previous, rather authoritarian director had left after serving only a small part of his term, Dr. M.’s pleasant, well-balanced personality, quiet competence, and solid trustworthiness soon led to a calming of the atmosphere in the institution and thus to the possibility of cleaning up the damage that had been done. Through his attitude and his approach, Dr. M. offered his staff the opportunities to clarify goals and boundaries, to improve the centre’s internal structure and re-emphasise its ethical standards, so that it could continue its successful work and even grow in its potential, in terms both of content and financially.

Characteristic of Dr. M.'s way of working was to trust people, value their initiatives and their industriousness, confirm them in their own sense of identity, and encourage a positive, forward-looking perspective on their work in general and their individual contributions to it. Thus, given his completely different personality structure, Dr. M. succeeded in turning an ugly, unhealthy situation where negative dynamic threatened to destroy the very existence of the organisation into one of optimism, economic and spiritual renewal, and faith in the future of the institution.

Playing, reality, and creativity—the “space in-between”: the earliest “not-me” object relations as the cradle of creativity

Dissatisfied with psychoanalysis' over-emphasis on psychopathology and the many and varied problems and failures of development, and passionate in his interest in normal development, shortly before his death in 1971 the English pediatrician and psychoanalyst, Donald Woods Winnicott published a little book called *Playing and Reality*. In this book he advanced a psychodynamic theory of creativity and its relation to children's play that opened the possibility of a new and forward-looking perspective on childhood development and its relation to the creative urge as it manifests itself originally in play activity. Given today's vibrant interest in creativity in the world of management and business, it is worth noting what Winnicott had to say about its inception as a key to fostering freedom of thought and creative potential at the adult level.

On his way to realising the essential distinction between inside and outside, between the internal world and the external world, the human infant has a tendency to “choose”, to “seek out” and/or “find” a something which he comes to recognise as what Winnicott refers to as the first “not-me” object. In studying this phenomenon, Winnicott says it is important to note the following:

- The nature of the object.
- The infant's capacity to recognise the object as “not-me”.
- The place of the object: outside, inside, at the border.
- The infant's capacity to create, think up, devise, originate, produce an object.
- The initiation of an affectionate type of object-relationship.

This theory, as described in Winnicott's paper "Transitional objects and transitional phenomena: A study of the first not-me possession", states that:

... of every individual who has reached to the stage of being a unit with a limiting membrane and an outside and an inside, it can be said that there is an inner reality to that individual, an inner world which can be rich or poor ...

and further, that the development of this inner reality is based upon:

an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area which is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related. (Winnicott, 1953, p. 1)

In his exploration of these phenomena and objects, Winnicott takes us from the baby's earliest behaviours, such as thumb-sucking, bodily self-exploration, and other pleasure-seeking acts through his "finding" of a dummy, a blanket, a pillow or other "object" which he or she invests with this quality of "not-me-ness".

He sums up its major characteristics as follows:

1. The infant assumes rights over the object, and we agree to this assumption. Nevertheless some abrogation of omnipotence is a feature from the start.
2. The object is affectionately cuddled as well as excitedly loved and mutilated.
3. It must never change, unless changed by the infant.
4. It must survive instinctual loving, and also hating, and, if it be a feature, pure aggression.
5. Yet it must seem to the infant to give warmth, or to move, or to have texture, or to do something that seems to show it has vitality or reality of its own.
6. It comes from without from our point of view, but not so from the point of view of the baby. Neither does it come from within; it is not an hallucination.

7. Its fate is to be gradually allowed to be decathected, so that in the course of years it becomes not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo. By this I mean that in health the transitional object does not “go inside” nor does the feeling about it necessarily undergo repression. It is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread out over the whole intermediate territory between “inner psychic reality” and “the external world as perceived by two persons in common”, that is to say, over the whole cultural field. (Winnicott, 1971, p. 5)

It is this last statement which provides the key to the usefulness of this theory in our study of vulnerability and power. For, in order to think powerful thoughts and do powerful deeds, one needs to be able to tap into the sources of one’s creativity. And in order to do that, one must allow oneself to become vulnerable to the vicissitudes, to the interchange between internal and external reality.

To give just one short example of how this interchange between the internal and the external world can lead to powerfully creative solutions, let us refer to the biography of Steve Jobs. Writing in his biography about Jobs’ adoption and early life, Walter Isaacson relates the following:

Abandoned. Chosen. Special. Those concepts became part of who Jobs was and how he regarded himself. His closest friends think that the knowledge that he was given up at birth left some scars. “I think his desire for complete control of whatever he makes derives directly from his personality and the fact that he was abandoned at birth” ... “He wants to control his environment, and he sees the product as an extension of himself”. (Isaacson, 2011, pp. 4–5)

Thus, whether it was clarity of the integrated circuit for the first Mac, the rounded corners of the iPhone, the colour of the casing for the NeXT computer or the stairwell of the Apple stores, Jobs innovative genius, but also his need for absolute control over his “objects”, led the way. Regarding Jobs, and innovation’s place in American and world business in the twenty-first century, Isaacson writes:

At a time when the United States is seeking to sustain its innovative edge, and when societies around the world are trying to build

creative digital-age economies, Jobs stands as the ultimate icon of inventiveness, imagination, and sustained innovation. He knew the best way to create value in the twenty-first century was to connect creativity with technology, so he built a company where leaps of imagination were combined with remarkable feats of engineering. (Isaacson, 2011, p. xxi)

Unfortunately, Isaacson cannot tell us whether or even if Steve Jobs' first creation partook of the characteristics of a "Winnicottian" transitional object or not, but that is not the point. The fact that his internal experiences, both traumatic and benevolent, coloured and shaped his attitude to his work and his creations is the lesson to be learned by anyone seeking to harness his own true strength and power and thereby conquer the anxiety that making himself vulnerable and open to the new, and therefore the creative, brings with it.

Group dynamics: the individual and the group

Finally, born and separated, more or less securely attached and more or less well developed in his personality and creativity, our infant/manager must now learn to make his way through and get along in that maze of interpersonal relations which makes up the group.

In his famous classic work on group dynamics, *Experiences in Groups*, W. R. Bion states clearly that, as members of the human species, we have no choice but to be a part of a group or groups. Quoting Aristotle, Bion reminds us that "man is a political animal" and goes on to claim "that group mental life is essential to the full life of the individual, quite apart from any specific or temporary need, and that satisfaction of this need has to be sought through membership of a group" (Bion, 1961, p. 54).

Following on from this basic fact of our human condition, it is clear that the relationship of the individual to his group of reference will have a profound impact on his ability to exercise power and to expose his vulnerability, for both require the group in order to be experienced.

Without going further into the details of Bion's group dynamic theory, two points that he makes seem particularly relevant to our topic:

- the tension between what he calls the ever present "basic assumptions group" and the "work group", particularly as this applies to leadership of the group, and

- the tension between the individual and the group, between individuality and groupness as manifest in the struggle to maintain one's identity while still maintaining one's status as an accepted member of the group.

Let us explore the second point first. As Bion so graphically describes it, the individual is thus "damned", as it were, to seek group membership in order to lead a "fulfilled" life as a human being; the "group" then being made up of the sum of its individual members. This paradox, so Bion states, creates an inevitable tension and dilemma for each and every one of us as we participate in our various groups. On the one hand, we each want and need to retain and express our feelings of separateness, individuality, and independence, while at the same time needing to feel ourselves to be a part of, an accepted member of, the group. But the group's needs, attitudes, feeling states so often run contrary to our own. So, maintaining one's individuality without jeopardizing or even forfeiting one's status as group member becomes an insoluble dilemma, a squaring of the circle.

The immediate relevance for our neonate manager's ability to exercise power in the face of his or her feelings of vulnerability, poignantly felt as they are in the group setting, seems obvious. For, in order to exercise power, one must feel secure in one's individuality, one's sense of self, and one's sense of direction and purpose. However, to expose oneself to that extent as a unique individual immediately threatens one's status as "a member of the group just like everyone else". That is to say, maintaining the delicate balance between oneself as an individual personality and oneself as a genuine member of the group is essential to one's ability to perform leadership and management tasks, and must be learned and practised throughout life, from the first day of kindergarten to the last encounter with one's group of reference.

Referring to Bion's other point then, it thus follows that in order to be effective as a "work group leader"—that is, that person who is instrumental in getting the group to recognise what its work task is, and then getting them to do that work—the balance between exerting power, influence, and authority as an individual, and making oneself vulnerable by asserting oneself in the service of the work task rather than the "basic assumption" task, is crucial.

For it stands to reason that only those persons who can assert and maintain their individuality (as well as respect the individuality of all

other group members) will carry the requisite authority to be able to exert a powerful influence on the group to work to task rather than indulge in “basic assumption-ness”. Only such an individual will be capable of engendering “followership” in the group to resist the tug of the basic assumption and replace it with work.

The development from a helpless and vulnerable baby to a potent, yet sensitive and mature personality is a lifetime task. At each step of the way, one can get off track, lose one’s orientation. Therefore we must recognise how much we each need one another’s help—as parents, partners, colleagues, coaches, therapists, supervisors, and friends—to keep to that healthy developmental path, and, if we do lose our way, to help get us back on the right track as soon as possible.

The universality of our struggle between power and vulnerability

Thus we conclude that our struggle between, on the one hand, wanting and needing to feel powerful, to feel in control of our personal situation and our fate, including the need to exercise power over our environment, and, on the other, the inbuilt fact of our helplessness and vulnerability as human beings, accompanies our development at every stage of our lives. Maintaining a reasonable and acceptable balance between the two is, in that sense, a primary task, both of our personal development and of our interaction with others and with our environment. The fact that that balance can all too easily become disturbed, very often with catastrophic results, is a lesson we know well from history. Vigilance is required in order that we succeed in judging and adjusting ourselves appropriately to the requirements of any given situation with which our fate confronts us. Too much exercise of power invites excess dominance and induces fear; excess vulnerability is ultimately insupportable, unlivable. It is up to each of us to strive to maintain a good balance between the two; or as Albert Einstein aptly put it: “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving” (Einstein, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/life>).

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CHAPTER TWO

Power and vulnerability in the board room: addressing fear and insecurity through dialogue and self-reflection

Claudia Nagel

Introduction

According to popular belief, the terms “power” and “vulnerability” are not used in connection with management and advisory boards. It is still a very widely regarded opinion today that those exercising power and managing a company cannot be vulnerable and sensitive, because it gets in the way of making and implementing decisions. How very closely power and vulnerability are interconnected and how they therefore reflect two sides of the same coin, is the topic of this paper.

From the outside, board members¹ are often viewed as having a feeling of invincibility and invulnerability: they come across as if nothing and no one can do them any harm. The organisational selection and promotion mechanisms have continuously confirmed their uniqueness and their distinctiveness. The consideration of, or the showing of, feelings is usually disapproved of and, at this hierarchical level, it is seen as an expression of weakness. Moreover, senior management should possess a high level of rationality since they are expected to make good strategic decisions—and these must be made in a smart, thoughtful, and forward-thinking manner.

But what happens if their decisions are a lot less rational than they think? And what if not only their brain but also their feelings and their inner world continually “play tricks on them” and, therefore, they are not even in a position to make a good decision? And what if this primarily happens because they do not want to be confronted with the unpleasant feelings of fear, helplessness, being out of control, vulnerability, and deficiency?

What is being posed here as a question is, in principle, a hypothesis that has its root in psychoanalysis but now is also being discussed in neurosciences and is receiving a continuously broader degree of acceptance.

One way out of this decision-making dead-end, which is especially significant for the long-term and far-reaching strategic decisions of the company, can be reached through a process of dialogic, self-reflective interaction amongst the board members themselves. Only through a dialogue-based process of reflection is it possible to succeed in overcoming the negative implications of individually subjective restrictions that result from universal human vulnerability and the similarly universal human desire for the compensatory exercising of power. In accepting this, it should be less about focusing on pathological developments than on the anthropological constants that in general terms are linked to being human. Addressing these phenomena, and dealing with them, can successfully be achieved only through the joint efforts of the board team.

*Change and thinking about the future
as grounds for fear and vulnerability*

If power and vulnerability belong together, then fear is never far away. Only those who know the pain of an injury also fear that injury. And the ability to exercise power and control helps to deal with this fear.

Although fear belongs to the biological make up of humans, it is one of the most avoided taboos in business, especially when speaking to executives and managers. It is quite interesting that even the simple mention of the word fear draws resistance and, in connection with economic events or events within the company, usually is considered to be too strong a word. It is easier to talk about concerns rather than about fears. Today, most people (not only managers or executives) seem to tend towards denying their fears and make themselves believe that

they have everything under control (whether or not this is connected to the increase in cases of “burn-out syndrome” would be interesting to explore). As far back as 1992, the famous doctor and psychoanalyst Horst-Eberhard Richter spoke about “okay moral”—everything is okay; no reason to be afraid. Even now, this hasn’t changed. Hüther highlights in particular the masculine tendency to reject fear: “It is very peculiar that especially men have perfected their ability to not perceive their fear” (Hüther, 2005, p. 44). He describes how boys keep perfecting the tricks that allow them to control their fear because they can do one thing especially well (e.g., climbing trees or playing video games) and continually perfect this, so that they can be applauded for those activities. The child attains security through recognition and this security leads to the feeling of joyful anticipation. Inquisitiveness and (pleasant) tension result and the fear is “out of sight”. As Hüther states:

however, only as long as nothing changes in the circumstances. Once the successfully employed strategies begin to lose their effect, or if portions of the stage on which everything worked wonderfully begin to erode, then the initial fear returns. Woe that person, who now has nothing better to combat this with but by climbing trees or playing with computers. (Hüther, 2005, p. 45)

Managers, even board members, would do better if they understood two central omnipresent aspects that trigger fear: the first, any large-scale change in the social environment of relationships; the second, thinking about a future that cannot be planned, along with the necessary decisions that accompany this. These two triggers apply to the management as well as to the work force: all are exposed to these triggers and to the mechanisms behind them.

The source of this fear of change is an accompanying threat to self-esteem and to identity. What is important in order to enjoy a relative freedom from fear in life is stability in relationships with other people. This defines the core of self-concept and identity and provides a corresponding foundation for positive feeling. Each change, especially a change that threatens a relationship, can release (uncontrollable) fear—the loss of a person close to you as well as their permanent presence, increasing distance as well as threatening closeness, too much (emotional) distance as well as too much emotional attachment, too much responsibility as well as too little trust. In companies this often results

in situations triggering fear, since the people and the organisation are constantly faced with changes that are either precipitated by the environment (markets, suppliers, competitors, customers) or come about as a result of people who are newly arrived or recently departed, or others within the company and the structures.

What is less known is that even the act of thinking about the future in itself already triggers fear. Therefore, the vulnerability that accompanies the triggering of fear is as important an anthropological constant as the fear itself. The knowledge surrounding this fundamental vulnerability is therefore more important, in that, time and again, the strategic decisions of the management board take place under the insecurity of the future. Nobody really knows future events and how markets, customers, suppliers, and even we ourselves, will develop, even though the corporate controlling and strategic development assumes that the company's future course can be predicted and planned based on probabilities that can be calculated or at least assessed.

In addition, business economics view the employee as a *homo oeconomicus*, as a rational, reasonable, and utility-maximising creature. However, research fields such as behavioural economics, behavioural finance, and behavioural strategy are increasingly calling these rational human behavioural patterns in the economic context into question, even if these findings have not yet found introduction everywhere. Essentially, the very act of looking toward the future exposes the very special "human quality" of mankind. That supposedly rational creature turns into a creature that needs to control and influence everything—but why? For one simple reason: we cannot influence the future and we live in constant fear and anxiety about not being able to handle the events that the future holds. Nobody likes to admit feeling anxiety when looking toward the future: no entrepreneur, no senior manager, and no decision maker. However, anxiety belongs to man's fundamental biological building blocks. "Normally" there is no view into the future, no long-term decision about one's own future or the future of the company that is not accompanied by this anxiety. Furthermore, feelings of anxiety are located in the same region of the brain where competence and planning reside.

The ability to plan—and the feelings of fear that accompany this—are both related to thinking about the future, and both activities are processed in the frontal lobe. This part of the brain is located directly above the eyes at the front of the head and, phylogenetically speaking, is the

brain's youngest part. This part of the brain is also credited with the ability of the individual to project himself (as a normal grown-up) into the future, that is, thinking about future actions and events and picturing himself as a part of this scenario. In experiments, and through the examination of certain illnesses, it has been shown that damage to the frontal lobe limits the ability to plan but, at the same time, also reduces feelings of fear and anxiety. These people cannot reflect on the past, the present, or the future; they only live in the present moment without being able to imagine a future and, at the same time, they do not show any feelings of anxiety (Gilbert, 2008).

What is important is this: thinking about the future and fearing the future are intertwined.

Thinking about the future is also emotionally important, since it is fun to get lost in daydreams about a wonderful future, about all the delightful and nice things that may happen, all the heroic feats that may be accomplished. This sensual side of thinking about the future is amended through the perception of negative experiences, occurrences, and unpleasant developments used in order to self-motivate, provoke thoughtfulness, and to react prudently and in a forward-thinking manner, so that painful experiences can be avoided.

The process of thinking about the future primarily helps us to create a picture of the future because the brain wants to control future experiences:

We look to the future in order to make certain prognoses, and we make prognoses so that we can control the future. ... The surprisingly correct answer is that humans enjoy wielding control—not to manipulate the future but simply for the sake of exercising control. Being busy—changing things, influencing things, allowing things to happen—is one of the most fundamental needs with which the human brain is biologically equipped and from childhood on this inclination for control expresses a large portion of our behavior. ... The fact is that humans are born with a passion for control and that they leave the world in the same manner. Research shows that you become unhappy, helpless and depressive when you, at some point during your life, lose the ability to control. (Gilbert, 2008, p. 52)

It just feels good to control the future; that is why we do it and we cannot act any differently. We want the feeling of exerting control and

being able to influence; the illusion of control has the same effect as actual control itself. This desire for control explains why a company's management board, especially, is constantly preoccupied with looking towards the future, with planning, and, in this manner, with taking control in order to be prepared to steer the company in the desired direction. In this sense it becomes an organisational defence against anxiety.

The illusion of foresight makes good planning more difficult

However, the problem is that we cannot really envision what the future will actually be like. The future does not just happen differently than expected, but when looking into the future we subject ourselves to three systematic and psychological types of illusion that Gilbert describes as "illusions of foresight": realism, presentism, and rationalism (see also, for the following explanations, Gilbert, 2008).

- Illusion of realism
 - We idealise the future. We conjure up perfect stereotypes of behaviours and events. We omit details of the future in our future imaginings that will powerfully affect how we will feel. We fail to imagine what will not happen. We make compound errors both of "filling in" and "leaving out" in our imagined vision of our future selves and future lives.
- Illusion of presentism
 - The imagined future often looks like the actual present. We tend to project the future, and not anticipate or allow for discontinuities. We are rooted in the present and cannot imagine things that are very different from the way we are now.
- Illusion of rationalism
 - We are much more resilient than we think, and possess what Gilbert calls a "psychological immune system" which "cooks up the facts" and provides us with comforting illusions about ourselves and our situation. We see ourselves more positively than objectively, and while we do most things subconsciously, we positively rationalise "conscious" reasons for what we do, or do not do, in order to make ourselves feel better, and more "in control". We regret inactions more than actions. And, illogically, we view situations that we perceive more positively than very similar situations over which we have some choice.

These universal illusions affect our ability to plan the future to the extent and with the quality and accuracy that we think we can predict. This poses a problem for corporate leaders, since their strategic decisions have an impact on jobs and the very livelihoods of their employees. But these illusions at least help to remove the insecurity of not knowing and impart a degree of, and a feeling of, control; even the fear of the unpredictable future is reduced. In other words, the brain supports us in overcoming fear. All managers have intuitively used the abilities of planning in order to provide themselves and their employees with the feeling of control, thereby reducing the fear that accompanies the future. There are also other, supplementary, mechanisms, which we will discuss shortly, that can help to overcome fear and can lead to better results because they can, at least partially, overcome subjective limitations.

Planning helps a lot, but it's not everything

Before we can consider this, it is necessary to state that planning is not sufficient to control fear. Many managers and executives have a perception of today's complex reality and it appears to be more and more uncontrollable. The result of this is that archaic reactions towards fear gain the upper hand. These reactions are based on our biological programming and lead to two opposite behavioural patterns: attack or retreat. In stress situations, most people are inclined to react in one of these behavioural patterns. Usually, these reactions occur automatically and without conscious control because the feeling of fear serves as a warning mechanism for triggering either an attack or retreat reaction toward a natural enemy. The feeling is accompanied by a range of physiological reactions such as a rapid heart rate and increased blood pressure, increased perception and preparedness for action, and, quite possibly, a cold sweat. In the history of our development, this hormonal reaction is especially designed to mobilise the body's innermost reserves in order to survive a dangerous situation. Named "stress reaction", this occurs during threatening as well as only perceived as threatening occurrences or even during fantasies of fear (Hüther, 2005).

Attack and battle, retreat and escape, are terms that remind one of military language. The first debates regarding the psychology of leadership took place in the military. Business activities are often described using militaristic terms, most likely because competitive behaviour also

follows basic militaristic patterns. Corporate strategy is often compared to military-strategic concepts (Staehle, 1991).

However, most company strategists have probably missed reading what one of the most famous of military strategists said about handling fear and insecurity. Even today, Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831) is known as one of the greatest military strategists of his time and one of the founders of strategic management. Before his time, warfare was based, in large part, on medieval perceptions that were not that different from those of the ancient Greeks. Tactic was everything and the end result was, more or less, in God's hands. Frederick the Great (1712–1786) and Napoleon (1769–1821) were the first famous leaders who broke the rules, and it was Frederick the Great who inspired the French military theorist Graf Guibert to introduce the terms “stratégique” in his manuscript “Défense du système de guerre moderne” (1779) (von Oetinger, 2008).

The militaristic background of this term can be found in its roots that date back to ancient times: originally from the Greek, in which “strategos” refers to the military commander, it is based on “stratos” (army/division) and “agein” (leading). In Latin, “strategia” referred to the areas that were under the control of a “strategus”.

Carl von Clausewitz lived in a time when the first mathematical models made risk calculable (which lay the foundation for our perception of *homo oeconomicus*); however he developed a radically different procedure for military strategy. As a military scientist he provided—in his renowned and magnificent work *On War* (“Vom Kriege”)—a comprehensive depiction of his own experiences with war, and his insights and reflections regarding it. (See von Oetinger, 2008 and Staehle, 1991). For the first time, Clausewitz criticised the current prevalent mechanical-geometrical thinking of strategists (waging war with logarithm tablets)—this is especially interesting because in today's strategy work, the methods and tools, which are, at least, also applied in a somewhat mechanical way, still possess a high degree of popularity.

For the ongoing discussion of strategy, and for this paper, the correct understanding of Clausewitz is of great significance since he would have rejected today's dominance of methods and instruments. He believed it was important to think strategy and, based on his message, this can only be done by an individual on the basis of experience, intuition, and talent on the one hand and exact surveillance of reality on the

other. "Under no circumstances may general thoughts overtake the role of the individual thought process" (von Oettinger et al., 2008, p. 39).

With his work, Clausewitz did not want to develop new principles and methods of waging war, but to reduce what existed to its innermost interconnections and simplest elements: he was interested in the overall concept of war and its essential core (Hahlweg, 1972). He also didn't want to write a textbook or a "how-to" manual, but for him the training of the intellectual spirit was what mattered, especially the personal, individual power of judgment that views every event, every process in the reality of life, and thinks these through down all conceivable avenues. One should be able to evaluate a problem philosophically-dialectically in all conceivable directions, combinations, and interrelations, as well as according to one's own perceptions, but also based on each perceived external reality in order to comprehensively think through and assess each problem in order to arrive at the fullest understanding (of the problem). His theories and methods were based on connecting three areas with each other:

The depth of the historical realm of experiences, the philosophical-dialectical thought process as well as the realistic-critical analysis of the exercised military and political practice in connection with a vigilant following of current events, its changes and its development tendencies. (Hahlweg, 1972, p. 19)

For this, the individual power of judgment is decisive.

The use of this individual power of judgment, which he places at the core of his reasoning, is, in particular, dependent on character, life experiences, and intelligence. For Clausewitz, making an entity of theory and practice was the goal, as he was interested in a theory that should remain practical.

The theory should also take the human aspect into consideration, also the courage, the daring as well as the audacity should be granted its place. The art of war is about the spirited and moral powers, which means that it can never achieve the absolute and the certain. (von Clausewitz, 1973, p. 208)

The human factor, which Clausewitz refers to as "*expressis verbis*", is, based on my knowledge, precisely what separates him from many of

today's strategists (with the exception of the Chinese, who attain their strategies through entirely different ways and means). In order to live up to the perceptions of Clausewitz, we, in particular, require the ability for critical self-reflection.

The connection of a trained philosophical-dialectical approach to each situation with a human aspect such as the capacity for enthusiasm and fear—in other words, a psychological understanding—makes Clausewitz a pioneer of modern strategy development. That is especially apparent in the following quote: “Not what we thought is the benefit of theory, but the manner in which we thought” (Hahlweg, 1972, p. 26.) This “how” is philosophically posited, but also psychologically informed and critically self-reflected. Through philosophical reflection, it is also possible to integrate the human factor into thinking and to take it into consideration.

Clausewitz was also the first in the western world who recognised the importance of the personality of the warlord and how necessary it is for the warlord to recognise his own weaknesses.

In the Far East, Sun Tzu was one of the first to explicitly use human nature, its ability to be manipulated as well as the ability for self-recognition in military strategy. In AD 500, Sun Tzu wrote in his stratagems:

If you know your enemy and yourself, then you do not have to worry about the outcome of 100 battles. If you know yourself, but not your enemy, then you will suffer a defeat for every victory you achieve. If you know neither your enemy nor yourself, you will lose every battle.

At this point, something that is decisive for strategy development is becoming more apparent: empathy for others, be it a competitor, enemy, stakeholder, or customer. Only those who know themselves, their own feelings, fears, and vulnerabilities, as well as strengths, are in a position to empathise with others. One can only empathically understand what others feel if one has felt it oneself.

As a commander-in-chief, the key to successfully handling fear is in having the ability to know oneself, one's own strengths and weaknesses, and to always question and challenge these. This should be complemented by a good ability to observe the environment and the integration of this knowledge with self-reflection. Recent neuroscience

research confirms this conclusion. The ability for self-reflection counts as one of the three decisive factors in dealing with fear (Hüther, 2005).

One of the general ways one copes with fear is through the presence of a person close to you, a friend or partner who provides the feeling of closeness and security. Through this, both the feeling and the extent of fear can be reduced. The feeling of not being alone, of having someone able to provide advice, who comforts and empathises, can help to reduce the experience of fear and its physiological reaction to stress (Hüther, 2005).

Attempting, and improving on, existing solutions is another way in which fear can be overcome. Overcoming a fearful situation can create a feeling of success, which provides self-confidence and leads to its repetition during the next situation. This can either lead to a healthy development or a neurotic hardening. Controllable challenges, or challenges that are perceived as such, can lead to a specialisation in overcoming difficult situations, and can also lead to further personality development and traits.

The third and most important long-term possibility in overcoming fear is contemplation, especially about oneself. This includes: constantly reflecting about one's thinking, feeling, and acting, and questioning oneself about how grid-locked one's problem-solving has become, acutely observing what is going on around and how other people react and how we influence others and are influenced by them. Self-reflection is a central strategy in overcoming fear, which combines the first two strategies (seeking closeness and specialisation) and in this way offers the possibility of ongoing personality development (Hüther, 2005).

However, instead of self-reflecting, more often than not most people today tend to react with mental defence mechanisms that can, ostensibly, be subsumed under repressing and forgetting. Unfortunately, in avoiding the confrontation with fear, also the positive action- and decision-guiding effects are lost. Because fear functions like an alarm bell, a feeling of fear points to something to which one should pay attention, otherwise this specific functionality is lost. Dealing with fear is therefore decisive for personal development and for personal maturity. Avoiding and repressing fear not only does not lead to personal development and growth, but in effect can have long-term psychological repercussions; the permanent stress under which the body is operating but which is not being processed can lead to severe illness and even death. This repression mechanism can be hidden behind a mask; the

thirst for power and status, even aggression or its opposite, submission, as well as an exaggerated cheerfulness, can act as a mask to hide the repression.

Even though we are born with the desire to control and manage a situation, this is not necessarily tied to exercising power.

The desire to control and influence other people and social situations is nothing pathological, but is a part of the healthy abilities of the ego that are required in order to deal with reality. However, the exercising of power can also serve to satisfy the pathological narcissism. (Wirth, 2011, p. 90)

Only as a compensatory mechanism, which covers the underlying fear, is it given its negative colour. That should actually be the alternative title of this paper: “Power and helplessness, the desire for control and the fear of being hurt”.

Can we ever make rational decisions?

Often this is where a counter-argument arises. Time and again, it is communicated that in business and in the board room it is not about feelings but about rational decisions regarding the future of a company. I have attempted to show that reflection about the future and the changes that await us universally triggers fear in humans. But this could be different for managers since they have been battle-tested against these fears (where this “battle-testing” comes from will be discussed in a moment), because they are more self-controlled, more disciplined, etc. However, as humans they are still subject to the same functionality of human thought—and decision-making mechanisms. And this includes the fact that thinking and making decisions are always related to feelings and emotions. One does not work without the other—the most recent research results indicate this. Thinking and feeling are not just two unconnected systems, as has long been believed, but they are directly related. It appears as if there is no thinking without feeling. Perhaps we are not always aware that each is related to the other, but, beneath the level of perception and awareness, it is very much so. This correlation can be summarised as follows.

During the course of our lifetime, we experience people and situations that we tend to evaluate in terms of how pleasing and desirable

or unpleasant and painful these encounters are. Each experience, each adventure, is processed in terms of these two fundamental categories. These categories result in our internal preferential system, which differs from person to person, as it is based on different experiences. These experiences always have an emotional component and therefore go hand in hand with a bodily perception. The bodily perception is experienced as a feeling and is consciously or unconsciously tagged with a so-called somatic marker. If we are faced with a new situation, the brain launches a comparative process. Either this new experience is recognised as similar to a previous one and strengthens the original one, or it is considered as dissimilar and is newly stored, thereby creating a new somatic marker.

Along with the knowledge and the life experiences that we store and which are assessed with feelings and somatic markers, comes the entire spectrum of a problem—from the facts, to the options, to the result and the short- and also long-term assessment of the results.

With future-oriented activities requiring planning—plans that are always based on life experiences that have been stored in our brain as a pattern and therefore cannot be switched-off—perception images of future events, activities, and results of activities are created in the brain. Through the somatic markers, that is, through feelings, a partially conscious and partially unconscious selection process of information occurs that controls both the attention and the attention span. Moreover, the assessment of the information is the important internal preference system, accomplished in part consciously, in part unconsciously. Through subsequent cognitive processes a further processing occurs, so that the entire decision-making process contains an emotional as well as a rational component which each support the other. Each processing of information, each decision, and each action therefore has an emotional and a rational foundation—sometimes we are aware of these foundations and sometimes the process occurs entirely unconsciously (Damasio, 2004).

The remarkable thing about this, however, is that as soon as a decision is made, our conscious mind always takes the credit for the decision! This occurs regardless of which conscious or unconscious aspects played a role in the decision-making process. Even if the emotional experience memory always has the first and last word in this process, our consciousness makes us believe *it* made the decision, which, as we can see, is an illusion. We always think that we have actively and rationally

made the decision ourselves. This is based on the fact that we have to be able to live with the decisions we make; in other words, it must appear to make sense to us and be plausible from the perspective of our previous life experience. Unconscious motives and conscious goals must be aligned, otherwise psychological illnesses can ensue (Roth, 2008).

What does a chairman or board have to do?

If the company managers become more aware of their own internal preference systems and the emotional assessment of their previous experience (help can be provided by good psychotherapists and psychoanalysts, but also by good friends), then strategic decisions that need to be made will be less affected by individual subjective experiences. Above all, it makes sense and it is helpful if these subjective experiences, and their emotional preoccupation, are more openly discussed and made available, so that as a committee we can arrive at a different type of opinion and decision-making determination. That would offer three essential advantages: first, through dialogue and reflection within the group it would be possible to engage in a content-related debate regarding the illusions of foresight. In so doing, cognitive biases that always accompany strategic decisions (for an overview, see Nagel, 2013) could be uncovered. The content-related quality of the decision would therefore be significantly improved.

Second, this kind of dialogue-based procedure would lead to an improvement in the quality of the process and on the interpersonal level could lead to improved relationships between the committee members. This is not only more fun but also creates enthusiasm and unity, both important elements in achieving a higher quality and speed of implementation.

Third, the interaction with like-minded people reduces fear and insecurity on the emotional level, so that the cognitive competences of those present could be much more effectively used in the reflection process.

What is important to note here is that these discussions are not a new generation of the wide-spread groups or workshops that take place or are being offered to committees or boards. The real difference is that we call for a real dialogue. Presentations that are more monologues than anything else, where prefabricated opinions are displayed only to provide information, do not really reflect this approach. What is particularly unhelpful is the silencing of concerned opinions and voices by

third parties, opinions dismissed on the grounds that they have already been thought of and properly integrated. A true exchange, a dialogue, means that one makes one's own perceptions and ideas available to the group for reflection. This is done by addressing one's own observations and assumptions that have led to an idea or conclusion and, in turn, to a conviction.

A critical contemplation, or thinking through and questioning of one's own comments, should be assessed, if possible, detached from the person. The confusion between the person and the idea, or between the person and the role, is one of the biggest difficulties in a dialogue process. It makes a common dialogue-reflexive decision-making process more difficult, since it is always accompanied by the (universal human) fear of rejection and criticism, and often cannot be endured.

Duly noted, we cannot outrun our subjective feelings—conscious processing is extremely helpful in taking non-standard, long-term, effective decisions in a constantly changing world and therefore can lead to a real competitive advantage for a company.

Whether a committee, such as a board, can create this type of collective reflection really depends on the personality structure of the chairman, as the chairman's behaviour effectively sets the tone. The more mature and developed that personality is, the easier it is to conduct such a reflection-based meeting. However, the more defined the narcissistic or psychopathic personality structures, the more difficult it is to conduct an openly constructive and self-reflective dialogue.

As it is quite common to find people at management level with certain narcissistic traits, it makes the introduction of this kind of process quite difficult. The manager's affinity to narcissism may have one advantage, as this particular person will be committed to performance and, based on his enormous discipline and ambition in attaining the highest ideals he will set for himself, he will always go further and strive to be better. However, underlying this is often the other side of the same coin: the existence of unconscious fear of failing miserably, of becoming a pathetic failure, a nobody. This fear leads on the one hand to an excessive need for applause, admiration, and recognition, but on the other hand it follows that criticism or critical remarks are viewed as an existential threat and, as such, cannot be endured. Behind the assumed self-love is a deep existential fear of being meaningless and amounting to nothing. This leads the person to use the others as an object so that he can bask in their recognition; he needs nothing more

than the radiance of admiration in everyone else's eyes. However, this makes him unable to have a real relationship that consists not only of admiration but involves a reciprocal friendly-critical exchange. However, when criticism and exchange are seen as a threat to one's self, no open dialogue is possible in the boardroom.

And that is the drama facing many committees. What they need in order to overcome the psychological difficulties that stand in the way of a good decision-making process—namely an open dialogue through which closeness is created—is often not possible, because, due to the psychological constitution of some members, this form of closeness represents an emotional threat.

Exerting power because of an unconscious fear of the future—supported by the fear of vulnerability as well as the fear of being “unmasked” as a vulnerable rather than powerful human being—prohibits this kind of strategy discussion and reflection on decision-making processes.

It is a vicious cycle that can only be broken by strong and mature personalities and by subsequent common, positive experiences.

The knowledge of the emerging field of “behavioural strategy” can be extremely helpful in this attempt.

Note

1. The German and the Anglo-American systems are different here. In the Anglo-American one-tier system there is one board that is simultaneously responsible for management and control, while in Germany the two-tier system foresees two boards, an executive and a non-executive board.

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CHAPTER THREE

The power of envy: a poison for workplace and organisational life

Mario Perini

What is envy, after all?

A common affect, a human emotion, just like many others?

A kind of relationship to the others or to objects?

A critical or hostile behaviour? A capital sin? A response to a perceived injustice?

Well, it would be easily said that envy is all these things. But also much more.

Aristotle (350BC/1954) defined envy as the pain caused by the good fortune of others. A comprehensive modern definition of envy states that it is a painful emotional state which “arises when a person lacks another’s superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it” (Parrott & Smith, 1993, p. 906), and is “characterised by feelings of inferiority, hostility, and resentment produced by an awareness of another person or group of persons who enjoy a desired possession” (Smith & Kim, 2007, p. 47). Moreover, what is important is that this “lack” may be just a perception, or even a fantasy, but nonetheless represents a real narcissistic wound.

Art, philosophy, and literature dedicated their best energies to describing, exploring, and dealing with envy. Giotto’s well known

frescoes in the Paduan Scrovegni Chapel portray envy as a nasty old woman with a snake coming from her mouth and rearing back, as if to bite her eyes, while many other painters typically represent it as a sick, suffering person, a “green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on”¹. Dante’s *Divine Comedy* describes the envious as sinners whose eyes have been stitched up with iron wire for punishment. In his treaty on ethics Spinoza argues that the pain is not a punishment for the envy, but is, in fact, caused by envy. Pushkin’s verse drama *Mozart and Salieri*, as well as Forman’s film *Amadeus*, point out the (imaginary) envious resentment of the latter to the former, that led to Salieri being suspected of causing Mozart’s death by poisoning and his subsequent madness as a response to guilt. Klein, the psychoanalyst with most interest in exploring this emotion, relates some early childhood anxieties to the infant’s envy for the mother’s capacity for feeding—her good breast—and to his impulse to consequently attack it, destroying in fantasy his source of life, love, and safety (Klein, 1957).

Apart from the classical reference to the gaze and the evil eye, a point all these representations have in common seems to be the emphasis placed on the poisoning quality of envy, namely its unique capacity to provoke pain and undermine life for the envied as well as for the envious and also for those in the system around them. The power of envy draws, in my opinion, on precisely this poisoning quality; and just as it happens to vipers, when the envious cannot inoculate their venom into a victim, they may end up self-intoxicated.

Envy and psychoanalysis

Among the various psychological approaches, psychoanalysis has been particularly concerned with envy and its vicissitudes, both in the inner world and in interpersonal relations. Freud first considered envious feelings as inherent to the young girl’s psycho-sexual development, as a consequence of the discovery of genital differences between genders, and a reaction to her “lack” of a penis, perceived as a sort of basic inferiority of women compared to men. The construct of “penis envy” has long been abandoned due to its failure to offer a sufficiently useful frame for dealing with sexual and gender issues, and also, due to it being closely associated with and reflecting the cultural biases and stereotypes prevailing in Freud’s times. Its

demise was sharply sanctioned by Woody Allen's classic quip, that he was "one of the few males that suffered from penis envy" (*Annie Hall*, USA, 1977).

However, if taken as a simple metaphor, this concept might possibly be recycled as a way of describing a peculiar feature of envy, namely its intense emotional power based on over-invested part-objects (such as the "phallus"), which therefore come to represent the whole self or the primary object, the person, and all its values and qualities. That is why the emotional quality of the "lack" that the envious feel and consider intolerable seems to have more to do with a threat to identity or existence than being a question of pleasure or pain. It is easy to see how such considerations bring the question of envy close to that of narcissism and of narcissistic balance.

A core issue in envious dynamics is predicated upon the point of "distance between self and other" and the paradoxical evidence that generally, more often than not, it is the little differences that mobilise envy, rather than the macroscopic gaps. This also appears to be in agreement with the dynamics of narcissistic processes, in particular of what Freud called the "narcissism of minor differences" (Freud, 1929).

Where Freud left off, Melanie Klein picked this issue up to begin her explorations, following a somewhat different path—the early childhood inner world of fantasies and object relations. As described above, Klein links envy to the baby's intolerance of the fact that the mother's breast, this nourishing good object on which the baby fully depends, does not belong to him. She suggests that there is a "primary envy" which is present in the mind from birth and represents a major source of human destructiveness (Klein, 1957). Other authors (e.g., Joffe, 1969) openly reject this conception, considering envy in early childhood rather secondary to frustrating experiences.

Drawing on Klein's theories, Bion suggest that envy may act as a force attacking links, both in the mind and in object relationships: its first victim would be what Bion calls the "alpha function", a mental integrative process which supports mature thinking and the capacity to be in contact with oneself and with others. He points out how envy essentially displays its destructive action against those objects and ideas that stimulate growth by means of primitive defensive mechanisms such as pathological projective identification (Bion, 1959).

As mentioned above, there is a close relationship between envy and narcissism. Authors such as Kohut and Kernberg, who studied normal

and pathological narcissism in depth, describe two different narcissistic expressions—grandiosity and vulnerability—both of which share a perception of inferiority, thus favouring the development of envious feelings and behaviours (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971, 1977).

In their in-depth empirical study on narcissism and envy, Krizan and Johar conclude that envy is more related to narcissistic vulnerability:

In short, those exhibiting narcissistic vulnerability find themselves in the perfect breeding ground for envy. On one hand, their self-absorption leads them to desperately depend on flattering self-evaluations across multiple domains, often via social comparison. On the other hand, their entitlement, inferiority, and self-doubt virtually assure they will come up against superior others whose desired position, success, or appeal will be viewed as unjust and out of reach. Together, these dynamics likely produce strong and consistent envy we observed in the current studies, and suggest that vulnerable narcissism is one of the most important personality diatheses for the experience of envy. (...)

Those high on narcissistic grandiosity, however, do not seem more likely to envy. Our data suggest they may actually be less likely to envy, their haughty grandiosity buffering them against these painful feelings. (Krizan & Johar, 2012)

On workplace envy

For the purpose of this chapter I will not look at envy from an individual perspective, concerning its role in the early psychic development or its consequences on interpersonal relationships, especially on psychotherapy or other helping relations. My exploration will rather focus on the impact of envy upon group and organisational dynamics, on the workplace climate, and the relatedness involved in doing a job, working with others, and belonging to an organisation.

Why all this interest in “job envy”? The workplace is imbued with all kinds of emotions, which, however, generally do not arouse much interest, partly because they are perceived as natural, human phenomena (which they actually are) but mainly because business cultures have very little knowledge of them, and, as a result, are unable to recognise, explain, and manage them properly, most of the time tending

to disregard or minimise their importance, turning them into “loose cannons”, potentially harmful for leaders, followers, and organisational processes.

Among these emotions, envy is undoubtedly the most neglected. This may be due to the fact that people generally deny that they are feeling envious, because envy is a condemned feeling and acknowledging it may imply that you confess to your own inferiority.

“Me, envious? Absolutely not, it is rather the others who are envious!”

A special contribution to underestimating envy also comes from current business culture which tends to equate it to emulation, which is certainly a mental state close to envy, but, differently from it, may elicit in people a drive for improvement and an effort to catch up with top performers.

“There is envy within my team? Great! So they are going to compete for excellence!”

The problem with workplace envy goes beyond the emotional experience, as it involves the kind of behaviours that may be stirred up at both an individual and a group or systemic level, and the related effects, occasionally positive but much more frequently destructive (or at least counterproductive), that it may have upon leadership, authority, team co-operation, working atmosphere, productivity, and outcomes.

In her introduction to her recent volume *Workplace Envy*, Bénédicte Vidaillet argues as follows:

... as soon as someone mentions envy in the workplace, it quickly becomes clear that we have all experienced it at some time or other. (...) And what do management manuals tell us about it? And human resources management manuals? Nothing. Absolutely NOTHING. Not only do they omit to mention that you, the reader, might one day feel envy in a work situation, but they do not even envisage that this emotion can emerge in any form in a professional environment. You will, however, find many pages about motivation, about how to stimulate your teams, or about staff evaluations and other topics, which indeed are interesting; but not a word is said about envy! (...) Envy is not supposed to exist in organizations, since it is never talked about and no management theory even mentions it. (Vidaillet, 2008)

My experience as an organisational consultant is quite in line with what Vidaillet states: the great majority of entrepreneurs, managers, professionals, academics, union leaders, do not mention or even bear in mind the existence of workplace envy, although the emotional, social, and financial costs that it imposes upon people and organisations is certainly far from negligible.

Let me list here a set of relevant conclusions about workplace and organisational envy.

1. Envy is a personal emotion which is part of the individual's normal psychic equipment, but it may turn into a pathological emotion and give rise to harmful behaviours. It may be "episodic", as a response to given events, or "dispositional", as an established personality feature (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Milfont & Gouveia, 2009; Smith et al., 1999).
2. Envy is ubiquitous and inevitable in a workplace and in organisations, but it is usually an unspoken issue because it is concealed, ignored, denied, and unrecognised. Envy is difficult to acknowledge by the envious as it is substantially an admission of inferiority and malice, and, as such, a socially disapproved of feeling. Envy is also difficult to identify by the envied because it implies facing the other's hostility and one's possible responsibility for having provoked it in the first place. Envy is also difficult to recognise by managers, as they would need a sophisticated emotional and relational repertoire of skills to confront it. In addition, for management to recognise envy as a powerful social process might place in jeopardy their own preferred view of competition as a powerful motivating lever.
3. Three-quarters of the workforce in organisations are estimated to have witnessed some kind of envious behaviour in the workplace during the last month, and over one half have been directly involved, whether as individuals or as groups, sometimes throughout the whole system (Miner, 1990). There is no evidence that envy affects one gender more than another, even though men and women seem to experience it in different way. Small-size offices and little organisations seem to foster the development of envy, most probably because workers are more exposed to family-like dynamics of intimacy, possessiveness, and jealousy.

4. Emulation may be considered a benign and even a constructive form of envy, which can lead to personal improvement and organisational growth. Crucial for emulation to develop is that one hopes and somehow trusts that the desired object may be achieved or the gap with the envied person bridged. When there isn't such hope, envy may become destructive for the envious, the envied, and the whole organisation, as it might undermine productiveness, career, relationships, job satisfaction, commitment, and organisational atmosphere.
5. The main root of envy in a collective context lies in social comparison, a general propensity of people to compare themselves with one another, and its negative psychological consequences, such as: inferiority, narcissistic mortification, intense longing, and feelings of injustice. It is interesting to notice that real unfairness and open inequality rarely give rise to envy; more frequently it leads to rage, indignation, or discouragement, whilst envy appears, instead, to be triggered by fictitious superiority, minimal differences, or well-deserved awards and compensations. Actually, it is, rather, envy itself that drives the envious to perceive another person's advantages as unjust and undeserved: his consequent harmful behaviour against the envied appears therefore aimed to somehow redress the balance.
6. Many researches bring evidence that workplace envy's primary sources are:
 - a. an unfavourable social comparison, particularly in areas that are felt relevant to personal identity and self-esteem
 - b. an over-competitive organisational culture
 - c. an open, public exposure of employees' comparisons and outcome measurements
 - d. managers with poor emotional intelligence who are unable to get in touch with others
 - e. an emphasis on individual performance rather than on team co-operation
 - f. a 'traumatic past' in individual life stories, such as deprivation, isolation, or violent fraternal rivalry during early childhood.
7. Unmanaged envy is highly harmful to people and organisations. Its damage derives first of all from active behaviour by the envious,

such as backbiting, personal attacks, social undermining (Duffy, Ganstor, & Pagon, 2002), even sabotages, but also from passive attitudes such as withdrawal, reduced work engagement, and capacity for collaboration, or the emotional state called *Schadenfreude*, namely, taking pleasure from another person's failure or misfortune. A significant indirect harm to the system's creativity is what Australian scholars call "Tall poppy syndrome" (Feather, 1989; Jones, 1993; Kirkwood, 2007; Peeters, 2003), to describe how top performers may hide their exceptional qualities and thus reduce their organisational contributions in order to protect themselves against envious attacks. These damages are clearly worsened by the fact that envy works out of sight and out of consciousness, as an invisible force, whose toxicity goes unrecognised, undervalued, or attributed to other sources, often masquerading as a legitimate "constructive criticism".

8. While in a psychoanalytic setting envy is fairly easy to detect, for instance when it fosters a negative therapeutic reaction, a reliable method to identify its action in workgroups and organisations has still to be discovered. Nonetheless, there are some indirect signs that might lead us to conclude that envy is working in the shadow of the organisational system if the following is being observed on the surface. I wish to propose a possible list of indicators:
 - a. unexplainable dislikes towards a workmate
 - b. unreasonable refusal to work with particular colleagues
 - c. insistence in claiming "special treatment" for some people
 - d. hypercritical, blaming, or backbiting attitudes to others
 - e. minimising the achievements of others
 - f. controlling the work of others
 - g. unexplainable absenteeism, withdrawals, or resignations.
9. The poisoning influence of envy is particularly evident on the organisational culture, which becomes increasingly affected by the following troubles: a global relational decay, irresponsibility and loss of solidarity among co-workers, expressed job dissatisfaction, demotivation, chronic conflict, either open or disguised, and, above all, lower productivity, impaired effectiveness, and destructive inward competition as the counterproductive side-effects of certain "envy policies", based on an exaggerated use of the competitive spur by the management.

10. Organisational cultures and managerial practices play a crucial role in stirring up, exacerbating, and disseminating envy, as well as in containing and mitigating its effects. Managers are generally unaware of how their own practices can mobilise powerful envy that may get out of control, thus negatively influencing the entire organisational culture. A number of managerial practices are deeply implicated in arousing envy, such as: recruitment, performance appraisal, career assessment and advancement, resource allocation, compensations, benefits, systems of incentives as well as general major organisational change processes such as downsizing, re-engineering, mergers and acquisitions, etc.
11. A fairly sane and evolved organisational culture may protect itself from being poisoned by envy in many ways. Here are a few examples: promoting autonomy, diversity, and respect, increasing awareness of the power of envy and its potential destructiveness, improving the balance between competition and co-operation. Some specific strategies have been suggested to the management so that the development of destructive envy can be prevented or contained, first of all the need to become aware of its risks and to be able to identify its overt and covert manifestations and symptoms.
12. Among the proposed suggestions to prevent or contain organisational envy are (Ashwin, 2005; Bowes, 2010; Dogan & Vecchio, 2001; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006; Menon & Thompson, 2010; Salovey & Rodin, 1984; Vidaillet, 2007, 2008):
 - a. fostering and supporting team work, solidarity, and collaboration for tackling this issue at an organisational level, by reducing the emphasis on personal successes in favour of collective results
 - b. encouraging open communication, frankly facing envy and its manifestations
 - c. giving people opportunities to improve their performance and self-esteem
 - d. avoiding public comparisons of employees' performances and ratings, or initiatives to glorify the "Stars", such as "The Manager of the Year Award"
 - e. warding off real or perceived favouritism through openly clarifying evaluation criteria
 - f. appointing high performers to mentoring roles

g. dealing with awards and incentives in ways that balance the advantages of competitive levers with the costs of envious behaviours.

13. Individual workers should also consider how to protect themselves from becoming targets of their colleagues' envy. When working in a team they should try to adopt attitudes and behaviours marked by modesty and acceptance of formal and informal group norms, avoiding highlighting their qualities and successes as well as avoiding exposing too many personal details or weak points. They should be able to turn for assistance to consultants, coaches, or mediators, when available, and if all else fails, to consider whether leaving this "sick" organisation might not be a better option.

It is hard to decide whether these suggestions could actually prove to be effective antidotes to workplace envy, but they might be considered an important and explicit "manifesto" in support of the need for healthier organisational cultures aimed at making working contexts safer and more transparent and being more humane systems.

Psychoanalysis and organisational envy

Workplace envy is not an exclusive domain for psychoanalytic research. Many other disciplines—philosophy, occupational and organisational psychology, social and political sciences, economics—have made some efforts, although not always in a systematic way, to understand how envy affects human behaviour in working contexts and to evaluate its impact on individuals, teams, effectiveness, corporate finance, well-being, and the fate of the organisation itself.

It is well known that psychoanalysis is particularly interested in, or even challenged by, what appears to be somehow unseen, unspoken, unthought of, with the assumption that behind a "blind silence" there resides an unconscious issue waiting to be revealed, a clue to some unresolved business. The unique contribution of the psychoanalytic lens can bring a different understanding of the power of emotions whenever human nature is called in to interact with rational structures and mechanical or digital processes.

With respect to workplace envy—a topic which is hardly discussed, or is addressed in a superficial, biased, or moralistic way—psychoanalysis may help to promote a reflective process and a "cultural

change” around this issue. Psychoanalysis could contribute to achieving the following goals:

- to throw light on the attitudes of unawareness, denial, or disavowal which prevent people from perceiving and acknowledging the presence of envy
- to counter the tendency to overvalue emulation (the positive, evolutionary side of envy), a tendency which may work as a kind of social defence by obscuring envy’s negative aspects
- to focus in depth on the destructive side of envy and the severe damages it can cause for both the organisation and its members
- to offer insights and observational data supporting empirical research in order to find envy predictors, indicators, and reliable tools to try to measure envy’s organisational impact, including in financial terms
- to foster organisational cultures, managerial attitudes, and business strategies that may help managers to recognise envy, to avoid stirring it up, and to contain its toxic aftermath.

The challenge for psychoanalysis, when faced with emotions in organisations, is the “impossible mission” to reduce the myth of organisational rationality. On the one hand, psychoanalysis is a “weak” body of knowledge, which is now frequently under attack, but it has nevertheless to dialogue with stronger, and sometimes arrogant, “rocket” sciences, like economics or neurosciences. On the other hand it is challenged by the task of exploring envy not so much as an “evil” behaviour, but rather as an uneconomic choice. In fact, economics which appear undermined here are not only concerned with finance and business resources, but also with intangible assets such as relatedness, well-being, and sustainability.

The study of workplace envy in particular might relegate to museum pieces Pareto’s assumption that economic behaviours are rationally driven by the search for one’s own advantage. Some researchers have found evidence that in randomised groups, when faced with the alternatives of either making some money while others would actually earn more, or sacrificing part of their own capital to cause to others a greater loss, about two thirds made the second choice (Zizzo, 2003; Zizzo & Oswald, 2001).

As these and other social experiments on “money burning” and fair distribution, as well as the recent financial markets’ meltdown, seem to

prove beyond all reasonable doubt, powerful, primitive, and scarcely controllable emotions such as envy, greed, and fear, hold hostage the supposed rationality of organisational life, leading to scenarios where it is likely there will be no winners and where everybody has something to lose. In this sense the global markets' "perfect storm" also opened a chink of awareness in a tough rationalist armour, bringing some evidence to Freud's statement that unconscious processes make the man "no longer master in his house", that is to say, in his own mind (Freud, 1917).

A chink of light, an opportunity, may nevertheless quickly close again, as has happened so many times. But it is interesting to see that economy and psychology, mind and market, are beginning to come together in an ambitious attempt at building an interdisciplinary dialogue in order to face some new aspects of globalisation and its contradictions.

One product of this interdisciplinary dialogue is a recent approach to an understanding of irrational economic behaviour that has been called "neuro-economy" (Camerer et al., 2005); another is an intriguing article on "emotional finance", written by David Tuckett,² a senior member of the British Psychoanalytic Society, and Richard Taffler, Director of Finance and Investment at The Edinburgh University Management School, which shows how "psychoanalytic thinking based on clinical experience can illuminate instability in financial markets and its widespread human consequences" (Tuckett & Taffler, 2008).

An attempt towards broadening this dialogue was made during a recent international symposium on "Workplace Envy", which took place in Turin, Italy, in September 2011, bringing together people, experiences, and knowledge from many different backgrounds, ranging between psychoanalysis, systems-psychodynamics, cognitive and experimental psychology, healthcare and welfare, history, economics, social and political sciences, religion, and art. A volume collecting many of these contributions is to be published in 2013 (Duffy, Merlone, Perini, & Smith).

In such scenarios, envy appears to go far beyond a simple human emotion confined within individual or group boundaries. It begins to act as a systemic process that can affect the whole organisation, including leadership, workforces, marketing strategies, and managerial cultures. Even large corporations may end up intoxicated by deadly emotional cocktails where envy is mixed up with greed, hyper-competition, and narcissistic grandiosity.

Discussing the case of a Finnish bank, Santti offers a hypothesis that some insane aspects of mergers and organisational growth might be related to a culture rooted in envy and narcissism:

The politics of evil and envy can be seen to work through institutions and organizations. ... Envy, which is the chief factor producing evil, is a strong common force working on many levels within an organization. Institutions are normally not evil entities in and of themselves, but envious forces may be strong motivators in their work and action. The main goal of a narcissistic and envious organization may be growth and size for its own sake. It can be asked to what extent such irrational forces are behind prevailing trends towards international and global mega-organizations. (Santti, 2001)

The toxic effects of “envious organizations” not only derive from the direct harmful action of envy, but also from the defensive systems that it arouses. Besides the already mentioned “Tall poppy syndrome” there are many other “destructive ways of dealing with envy” (Kets de Vries, 1992) which may become incorporated into the organisational culture. One is idealisation: for example, excessive admiration towards leaders may be a way of concealing envious and aggressive feelings. Employees may thus “keep their envious impulses under control by exaggerating the [leaders’] qualities and directing their negative (destructive) tendencies onto scapegoats” (ibid.). This may bring about different damages: apart from scapegoated people’s sufferings, one must consider that idealised leaders may be seriously impaired by their followers’ seductive or flattering attitudes, and are, moreover, inevitably exposed to incurring fierce disappointment and denigration as soon as something goes wrong.

Withdrawal from competition, self-defeating or devaluating, and other forms of fear of success are also extreme countermeasures to avoid becoming targets of others’ envy: as a result, on the one hand there will be a drop in work effectiveness as the social defences tend to divert creative energies from task and organizational responsibilities, on the other hand this will create ill-being and resentment, and a crowd of depressed or helpless employees, “organizational ‘hobos’ ... who continually get themselves into the same kind of

trouble—be it fights with superiors, procrastination on the job, shoddy work, or unethical practices—and have to move on to the next organization”. (ibid.)

It becomes increasingly clear that unmanaged envy may act as a systemic poison, affecting individuals as well as social groups and institutions in such a way that proves to be destructive both to the other and to the self, and, in particular, to welfare and the “common good”. This may become apparent in certain stock-exchange mechanisms, which the traders themselves do not hesitate to define as “perverse”. This is the case, for example, when gain expectations make a bet on business losses instead of profits. Such “reverse stock exchange” does not, according to many experts, play a zero-sum game, where what is lost by one player is gained by the other; as it seemingly does not just displace riches but eventually destroys a part of them, it thus clearly symbolises the shadow, destructive side of envy, and the subtle way in which it proves capable not only of making people suffer, but also of “burning money”. Actually “money burning”, an expression we happen to find all too often in financial columns, is also the name of an experimental method aimed at measuring envy’s impact upon economic behaviour, where it is clearly demonstrated that the most envious may be willing to lose some of their assets as a price worth paying to cause the envied a greater loss (Zizzo, 2003; Zizzo & Oswald, 2001).

This, I am afraid, could easily occur to a number of organisations. This is the case, for example, in the Gucci family business, eloquently described by Mark Stein:

A small, family concern founded in Florence at the turn of the Twentieth Century, Gucci developed into one of the world’s most successful global fashion and leather goods businesses. At the peak of its success, however, it descended into a hateful, ever-renewing series of battles and court cases within the ranks of its leadership. (Stein, 2005)

A wild struggle between the founders, involving their sons, no fewer than ten court cases, many millions of dollars in legal fees, physical aggression resulting in bleeding wounds, and an accusation of attempted homicide: such an escalation, fostered by destructive

envy, led to a nearly complete destruction of both the family and the firm.

Nothing new under the sun, anyway, if we only think of the following old Yiddish³ story:

Moishe is invited to heaven by God.

“On the earth you have been a good Jew—the Eternal says—so tell me what would you like to have, and this I will give you. Just consider that whatever you want, your enemy⁴ will get twice as much”.

After a while Moishe asks, “Take out one of my eyes”.⁵

Notes

1. W. Shakespeare: *Othello*, 1604.
2. Tuckett also published in 2011 a book with an eloquent title, *Minding the Markets*, which refers to the need of market economics to have a mind, but might also sound as a warning to “mind the markets”, as if they are dangerous steps that may make people suddenly fall and hurt themselves (Tuckett, 2011).
3. Also known in Arab and Christian versions.
4. Some different versions replace the “enemy” with the “neighbour”. This would suggest another well known evidence, that our adversaries, the target of our envious feelings, may be so often those who live next door, at our boundaries, as the typical idiomatic expression of urban envy, “keeping up with the Joneses”, implies.
5. *Storielle ebraiche [Jewish Stories]*, ed. Ferruccio Fölkel, Rizzoli, Milano 1988 [the author’s translation].

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CHAPTER FOUR

Who is the boss? Balancing power and vulnerability in the client–consultant relationship

Francesca Cardona

“They that have power to hurt and will do none”

—*Shakespeare, Sonnet 94*

Introduction¹

I meet with Anne, the director of a very successful company, to discuss some possible consultation to her organisation. The atmosphere is friendly, though quite cautious. We both know one of the main reasons we are meeting is her recent breakdown. She has been on sick-leave for a number of weeks and has reluctantly accepted the need to invest in, and delegate more to, her senior team. Anne is a formidable and extremely competent leader, who has developed her organisation significantly. Her breakdown has signalled to her and to the rest of the organisation that something has to change, in particular her centralised approach. The breakdown is not a secret, but it is something almost unspeakable. I have to force myself to mention it as an important factor in our preliminary discussion. I am also aware that this potential assignment could be a substantial and very interesting project: it would give me the opportunity to work in a new field and with an organisation facing exciting challenges.

This brief vignette illustrates the main focus of this paper: the dynamic of power and vulnerability between client and consultant.

Is it Anne who is in a position of vulnerability in relation to the consultant? She had a breakdown and needs help to change and develop her leadership approach. Or is it the consultant (myself) who is the vulnerable one? I am eager to be involved with the organisation and depend on Anne's experience of me to secure this assignment.

In this paper the dynamics of power and vulnerability are linked to issues of trust, interdependence, and the risk of collusion. Through a number of examples, I intend to address the complexity of the relation between client and organisational consultant and the need for constant adjustment, mutual challenge, and review.

The risk to trust

Trust is a fundamental element in the relationship between client and consultant. When there is ambivalence in their trust in one another, the fragile balance of power and vulnerability can collapse and give way to disruptive dynamics that can have a damaging effect well beyond the scope of the project.

Trust is not a given. To accept someone else's help requires trust not just in the other, but also in oneself. As Sievers points out:

Many authors rightly emphasize that trust not only manages risk, uncertainty and expectations, but also requires "one part's willingness to be vulnerable to another party"... The greater the risk trust has to "absorb", the greater the capacity required to cope with the loss when one's trust is violated'. (Sievers, 2009, p. 231)

Trust cannot be engineered: it is a fluid process that needs regular confirmation and reviewing. At the beginning of any assignment both client and consultant take a risk. In another paper I argue that there is a need to experience some degree of discomfort when we engage as consultants with a new organisation. I compare this idea to the morning sickness of the first phase of pregnancy, a phase of adjustment between the body of the mother and the foetus (Cardona, 2011). Ambivalence, anxiety, and suspension of trust are important ingredients in the engagement and the forming stages of a shared project. An initial ambivalence could be a useful antidote to mutual idealisation, excessive expectations, and

collusion. A client (individual, or organisational) might protect himself from trusting the consultant as a defence against shame—the shame of needing help, being seen as vulnerable, incompetent or ineffective. “Shame ... represents the affective experience of the sense of inadequacy of the self, of not being up to the task or of being defective ... The individual experiences shame in response to a sense that he ‘is’ a failure, not that he ‘has’ failed” (Hunt, 2000).

A consultant might maintain an ambivalent relationship with the client for fear of being seen in financial need, in a dependency position or in search of professional recognition. The risk to trust is accepting the dependency on the other and the reciprocity it entails.

Anne did give me the job and I am now consulting to her organisation. I believe she has developed some trust in me, just. A popular and successful leader, Anne constantly struggles to give me the authority and the power to intervene in her organisation.

Who am I to point out deficiencies in the organisation’s approach, lack of proper delegation, or excessive criticism of their competitors? I often feel on my guard when I venture some hypotheses or comment on how they work together. As during my initial interview, I sense that I need to be cautious about what I say and how I say it. The power balance is particularly relevant in an organisation that has developed from a fringe position and is now perceived as more mainstream and influential. The original imprint is of an organisation at the “margins” and this psychological “position” re-emerges regularly when the organisation feels criticised or is under stress.

The power to intervene and the power to hire

A couple of years ago I was invited to negotiate a potential piece of work with a very well known organisation in the arts field. The assignment was very small, but the significance for me of being involved with that organisation was incredibly high. I vividly remember the feeling of elation after the first meeting; I felt I had finally “made it”; I was working with one of the finest British institutions.

On the one hand, I had a genuine anthropological interest in discovering a new organisational world and understanding what was going on under the surface; on the other hand, I had a fantasy that I could have a real impact on such a prestigious organisation.

The hope of “a lucky break” is a constant element in the artist’s engagement with work: painters, dancers, actors, and musicians all

wait for “that special moment” when, from obscurity, they will become widely appreciated and well known. Feeling so elated and excited, I was mirroring an experience very common among artists from all disciplines. I was also experiencing a moment of potential power or potency when I was given the opportunity to make a difference, unlock a difficult situation, address a conflict, and introduce some changes.

Power is a loaded concept. It constrains us, but it also makes things possible. Without some degree of power we cannot make any effective intervention: “authority, though necessary, is not sufficient” (Obholzer, 2001, p. 201).

The consultant’s power provokes anxiety not only in the client but also in the consultant. Experiencing the expectations and vulnerability of the client can be as challenging as the realisation of one’s own power and capacity to influence. Knowing that something significant could be developed and being an instrument for substantial and meaningful change can be exhilarating.

The first meeting with a client is often full of promises: the desire, both conscious and unconscious, to create a productive partnership as well as the anxiety of having a sterile encounter, are present and in the room alongside the conversation. The exhilaration and dread in the client and in the consultant originate from leaving familiar places and embracing new possibilities.

It is at this point of the engagement that both consultant and client are most vulnerable. I often find myself with the desire to impress: show my skills, wisdom, and insights. I can also feel quite deskilled and uncertain, as if I had suddenly lost my capacity to understand, assess, and intervene effectively. The client might feel very mixed towards this new experience, feeling in need of some help and understanding, being both excited and anxious about the prospect of changes and developments, fearing to show his vulnerability, concerns, and difficulties.

The possibility of change can evoke strong primitive anxieties: the fear of pulling apart something familiar, well established, and containing.

Effective change requires sophisticated effort ... Yet it is the very features of organizational life that protect them from intrusion of primitive processes—its social defense system—that are at the same time being dismantled ... Consequently, efforts to innovate confront organizations with a paradox of change: change undermines features of organizational life that foster the very qualities of functioning required to make change succeed. (Krantz, 2001, p. 136)

In this “paradoxical” context the consultant might also feel the pressure not to challenge the status quo and he can unconsciously collude with the client’s wish not to change.

In a paper with Wendy Bolton we explore what we have called “the invitation to collude”. When a client (individual, team, or organisation) is in a process of change or experiencing problems, it is likely that a consultant may be experienced as potentially threatening as well as potentially helpful. A consultant is called in when a client decides that they need “outside” help—something different from inside—but it is the differentness of the consultant which the client attempts to eliminate for fear of what he might see or for fear of his criticism. Anne-Marie Sandler argues that the stage of stranger-anxiety, when the child of around eight months is frightened by the appearance of a stranger, is distinct from fearing the loss of one’s mother—it is about the experience of disruption of the dialogue with the mother by the intrusion of the “markedly unfamiliar”, the dissonance of the strange (Sandler, 1977). The consultant’s own needs may also come into play. He may be more prone to fitting in with what a client wants him to be, seeing things from their point of view and losing his difference, if he feels under pressure from his own needs. This can add to the likelihood of fitting in with the invitation to collude. The consultant can be experienced by members of the group as threatening cohesion, either by proposing changes or by drawing attention to the vulnerability and conflicts within the group. When the organisation is feeling vulnerable, the consultant may be experienced as the stranger threatening disruption (Bolton & Cardona, 2004).

The client can also exercise a substantial degree of power by hiring a consultant. “The power to hire” can have a significant impact on the relationship if the consultant feels too dependent on the assignment to be able to challenge the client or to quit if he feels ineffective. As consultants we should be open to be fired at any stage. This is not easily achieved. The capacity to review our role and effectiveness is often contaminated by our desire to influence and by our need to work.

*The vulnerability of asking for help: potentials for
negative transference*

Vulnerability comes from the latin *vulnus*, which means wound.

The director of a therapy centre for young people realised his staff needed some help to address the complexity and challenges of their work. A very sophisticated group, they were, however, quite ambivalent

about accepting a consultancy input. They were used to being “helpers” and found the process of showing their own difficulties and vulnerabilities painful. The director was particularly defensive in his approach. He regularly corrected and edited my hypotheses and seemed to struggle every time I commented on an area of difficulty. Paradoxically, having been “soaked” in other people pain and difficulties made the staff more resistant to looking at their own pains, conflicts, and differences. Having to show real vulnerability to each other and to me was like reopening a “wound”.

The staff of the therapy centre struggled to allow me to “see” their individual and organisational vulnerabilities. They treated me at times just as a “convener” of the group, with very little influence and not much to contribute. The feeling of shame and the fear of dependency translated into an ambivalent transference towards me.

As a consultant I knew I had both to absorb and to challenge their response. Engaging with and recognising their negativity was an important step towards creating a more balanced relationship where accepting their dependency needs did not mean they were becoming powerless.

The anxiety of showing one’s own vulnerabilities, as well as the fear of becoming dependent on the consultancy input, colours the relationship and the transference towards the consultant. Tim Dartington makes a distinction between primitive and mature dependency:

In its primitive sense, dependency derives from a frightening and frightened state of mind, where the immature organism looks desperately in its environment for a reliable object to save it from an unimaginable danger. (2010, p. 42)”

A mature dependency, in contrast, starts from a sociometric perspective, where “No man is an Island, entire to itself”. It is an interactive process that requires “both thought and action, where there is recognition of difference and a use of difference to achieve mutually agreed ends” (p. 44).

Dartington points out that the distinction between primitive and mature dependency is not always clear-cut. It is the fear of the “primitive” dependency that is often behind a negative transference or profound ambivalence. Melanie Klein talks about the importance of the integration between positive and negative transference and she links it to the early interplay between love and hate.

The analysis of the negative as well as of the positive transference and their interconnection is ... an indispensable principle for the treatment of all types of patients. (Klein, 1975, p. 53)

Because life and death instincts and therefore love and hatred are at the bottom in the closest interaction, negative and positive transference are basically interlinked. (p. 54)

Later, in discussing the process of integration during analysis, Klein emphasises the importance of establishing the patient's capacity for love: "... one should not underrate the loving impulses when these can be detected in the material. For it is these which in the end enable the patient to mitigate his hate and envy" (p. 226). There may be a tendency to focus on interpreting aggression and avoid the interpretation of loving feelings because of the fear of giving reassurance. But Klein clearly states that love and hate need to be brought together because interpretation of a patient's split-off hatred, without an acknowledgement of loving feelings that will mitigate the hatred, tends to result in persecutory anxiety rather than integration (Halton, 2011).

In organisational consultancy the positive transference has a more explicit and central place between client and consultant. There isn't too much space for regression in a consultancy setting. However, like the Gestalt concept of the figure/ground relationship, the negative transference doesn't disappear. Sometimes in the consultancy process the negative transfer has to move from ground to figure to allow more explicit work on negative and disruptive dynamics. Dealing with the negative transference can be challenging for client and consultant, as they can both resist the need to address negative and disruptive feelings in their relationship and can highlight vulnerability, both in the client and in the consultant.

Living with vulnerability means accepting and understanding one's limitations and yet continuing to live in an area that is unsafe. (Dartington, 2010, p. 116)

Conclusion: creating a shared context

"Music is the silence between the notes" (Debussy).

The creation of a shared context of understanding and collaboration between client and consultant builds a base that allows the dynamics of power and vulnerability to be addressed and managed. Winnicott (1971)

talks of “potential space” “an intermediate area between subjectivity and objectivity, between fantasy and reality, an area of illusion and compromise” (Amado, 2009, p. 264). As Amado points out, organisations might feel threatened by potential spaces because they bring ambiguity, doubts, and ambivalence.

Building a “shared context” or a “third space” is an essential element of the consultancy journey. This third space can exist if there is a common understanding and shared sense of the emotional meaning of the organisational purpose.

Halton talks of “evolutionary creativity” triggered by the need to develop, which is connected to a capacity for openness to uncertainty. “It is based on the need for further development within the depressive position” (2004, p. 111). It requires a mental attitude of patience.

The transition from an old synthesis to a new one involves a period of flux during which there are feelings of loss and gain. (p. 112)

... the emotional components are: depression, elation and anxiety. Depression because something is lost, elation because something new is coming, and anxiety because the future is unbounded and uncontained. (p. 116)

We could look at the consultancy relationship as an expression of evolutionary creativity where the power of co-creating something new is mixed with the anxiety of facing individual, group, and organisational vulnerabilities. The challenge for the consultant is to regulate the “distance” from the client in providing a setting that is both intimate and sufficiently distant to allow for new thinking to take place, creating a context where clients can allow the consultant to see their vulnerabilities without feeling disempowered. Paradoxically, creativity requires both togetherness and separation.

Evolutionary creativity can

give rise not only to hope, but also to envy. This envy is based on the feeling that the new idea was conceived by someone else, ... and not by oneself. Envy of creativity intensifies resistance to change. (Halton, 2004, p. 118)

Envy, and fear of envy, need to be managed and recognised as key ingredients of the consultancy process. Consultants should also be open to challenge their own dependency from the clients and be aware of the

risk of being “invited” to collude. The experience of being needed, of representing a positive and powerful figure, could prevent the consultant from maintaining a critical edge and letting go when it is time to end the assignment.

Ending should be considered from the outset and should always be in view to underline the transitional nature of the consultancy intervention. It is important to accept the transient nature of our work, by leaving some of our work unfinished and giving up our omnipotent feelings.

Note

1. The case illustrations are composite descriptions based on work with a number of individual with similar dynamics.

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CHAPTER FIVE

“Surely this can’t be true?” Unexamined relations of power in the care of vulnerable people

Tim Dartington

In thinking about the dynamics of care, I want first to describe the dehumanising of vulnerable people by the powerful, and see how a toxicity may develop in the care relationship, which regulation does not control, leading to the potential for abuse and the silencing of dissent. I then look at the ways that the management of care may also itself become abusive, by developing a defensive insensitivity to the pain of others. The ethos of efficiency makes inter-agency and inter-professional collaboration difficult, and processes of splitting and projection are again used defensively against a fear of dependency in others and, hence, in ourselves. A debilitating aspect of these processes is the splitting of the personal from the professional, so that those working in the interests of vulnerable people become reluctant to use their own experience as a way towards empathising with the suffering of others.

This analysis may be useful in meeting the challenge of managing vulnerability. I argue that care systems need strong boundaries to create a mini-society of compassionate relationships and not act out or reflect the materialistic individualism of wider societal relations of power and influence. By better integrating the personal and the professional, we may build on our capacity to respond appropriately, at times heroically

and at times stoically, to our own vulnerability to sickness, old age, and death, and then to the vulnerability of others.

This is a letter to the Alzheimer's Society in 2012:

My husband's dementia has worsened recently and I wanted to get 24-hour help so he could remain at home. While social services agreed he needed more care, they said they'd considered my request but could only offer residential care ... they said they'd already selected the home and that this was final. Surely this can't be true.

How can it be true that someone not guilty of any unlawful activity may be removed from their home without consultation and against their own will and that of their family? And yet such a situation in fact occurs daily and goes largely unremarked. The vulnerability associated with dementia leads to a denial of ordinary human rights. In part this is because we confuse this disease with a loss of identity, a dehumanising process that justifies and leads to the exercise of power over the vulnerable. But similar processes may be observed in relation to other diseases and disabilities, physical and mental.

You may say that it is unrealistic for someone with dementia to stay in their own home. Much the same was said of people with physical disabilities, who had to live in institutional care before the protests of the disability movement achieved radical change. At the same time, people with mental disabilities or learning difficulties were separated if they showed an ordinary interest in each other.

We become vulnerable when others act towards us as if we are less than fully human—as if we do not have the same rights as others to live our lives as we want. What is “realistic” is determined by those with power, and can only be resisted by those experiencing vulnerability in their own lives when trying to take authority for themselves, which may not be possible.

The dynamics of power and vulnerability are first of all about the denial and then the acceptance of death and dying as crucial to our understanding of ourselves in relation to others. An inwardly directed aggression, or death instinct, is turned outwards to be projected on to an other, so that the other, now seen as the aggressor, is then subjected to attack, as if in self-defence (Bion, 1967; Rosenfield, 1971). This potentially violent response to the vulnerability of the other is made

more troublesome in what may seem to be a relationship of care, where omnipotent narcissistic phantasy allows the other to be seen as a part-object, to be used to fulfill one's own desires, as one wills—so that the other, who is to be comforted, becomes the comforter, like a thumb to be sucked (or gnawed). This understanding, discovered through psychoanalytic observation (Klein, 1946), brings close to the surface the dynamics of care. To be powerful is to be potent, so that in the exercise of power we are momentarily unaware of our own vulnerability.

Vulnerability implies a greater than normal exposure to threat or danger. The exercise of power often involves the denial of that vulnerability in ourselves while at the same time locating and exploiting it in others. This is the manifestation, and working out in social relations and in the societal provision of care, of our earliest experiences of developing an identity—of me and not-me—at later stages of life, when our identity is again under threat from ill health and the ageing process (Waddell, 2007).

Mark Stein's description of toxicity as a crucial experience of the employee in relation to the customer (Stein, 2007) alerts us to the permeability of boundaries of the self, but also of the system. Front-line staff are just that—they are on the front line, representing the organisation in its interaction with its customers. The toxicity experienced by the worker is understandable: in the examples cited by Stein the customers were often drunkenly offensive, sometimes abusive of a male-female relatedness, and the employees were supposed to take it. The example of the call centre, where customers are aggressive at receiving unsolicited calls, shows how the boundary region—who is helping/hurting whom?—is invaded not only by the customer but proactively by the employee's organisation/the employee representing the interests of the organization. The café depends for its livelihood on meeting the needs of its customers, and the waiting staff flirt to get business. Cabin crew are trained in the emotional labour of containing the anxiety of airline passengers. It is surprising, perhaps, that in human service organisations in the public sector there is often little training in responsiveness to the trauma of others, for example, in the education of doctors and other professionals, whose capacity to show compassion may even be compromised or undermined by preferential focus on the technical aspects of their trainings.

I want to address this idea of toxicity with consideration of the care relationship. Those needing care are often themselves difficult, abusive,

violent, more so than customers of the café or airline passengers. We think of vulnerable people as sick, that they are not the people they used to be, but fail to notice how they are also challenging our own sense of identity by behaving differently towards us, and this puts them at greater threat and danger of our unconscious retribution. The system of care becomes itself a receptacle for our own unwanted projections of inadequacy into others.

The toxicity at the edge of a system can be understood as information about the system itself in relation to its environment. We may think that hotels exist for their guests and that care systems exist for their service uses. If only the world was as simple as that, really. There is an abrasive edge to any system, where it negotiates its space with those other systems with which it is interdependent, but in ways that are not mutually satisfying. For example, from a societal perspective we are generally uncurious about what goes on in prisons, so that successive reports of inhumane conditions published by inspectors of prisons lose their power to shock, while prison officers know they are doing a job on behalf of and for society, for which they may expect little public gratitude. Nobody wants a prison in their own neighbourhood. Therapeutic and rehabilitative programmes are introduced but then fail through lack of institutional and managerial support. Instead of care for the other, there is the growth of contempt. The toxicity comes in part from a customer environment of unhappy and stressed out people looking for projective objects, where they can locate and leave their own despair, like putting unwanted goods in store. It also derives from the unhealthy aspects of the organisation itself and its exploitative and manipulative relationship with the people it is there to serve—beginning with its relationship to its own employees.

We are all providers and also customers, so that in one role we may seem to act contemptuously towards ourselves in another role. As a customer, I have been intolerant at times of unsolicited telephone calls, offering me a service I might need. I have also been angry towards a bank employee, not because she was other than polite to me, but because I despaired of the arrogance of the bank's policy towards its customers. But I was sorry afterwards for the employee, who did not have any discretion in the matter of a trivial yet provocative bank charge—in contrast to my corner shop, which regularly waives small amounts of change, building good will in a way that the multi-national corporation

employee might envy. In such cases the toxicity is about a failure of relationship.

And that is what some current management practices are doing to the care relationship, by draining it of meaning through an instrumental approach to the routinisation of work practices. We focus on the defensive behaviour of those in the care relationship, the care assistant and the nurse, who are being trained to see people as fragmented and less than a whole, a series of tasks and protocols, while the defensive behaviour of their managers also requires attention but goes uncorrected (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012).

In a television exposé broadcast by the BBC Panorama programme in 2012, a daughter secretly filmed the care of her mother on the night shift in a residential care home. A care worker was sacked and later sent to prison, after which it was said he would be deported. The systemic failures of management—the rota where the care worker was inappropriately left on his own with female patients, and the senior management that sanctioned this level of resourcing—did not excite an angry reaction in the same way and went unpunished. It is easier to believe the fantasy of the bad apple and turn a blind eye to systemic failures that continue to put older people at risk in our society.

My hypothesis is that regulation without insight leads to bullying and to the silencing of dissent. "Don't come near me, don't come near me, I smell." This was a patient at Stafford Hospital, left to lie in his own excrement. At Stafford, at first, the government refused a public inquiry, arguing that it was unnecessary because of the system of regulation that was in place.

The Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust inquiry (Francis, 2010) is the latest in a long line of such investigations of institutional abuse. A common theme in these inquiries is that they demonstrate the need for a critical voice within the system, perhaps articulated best by those who are without a public voice and low in the hierarchy of power and authority. Yet those who take their own authority to act as the whistleblowers within their own system can expect harsh treatment themselves, because they are seen to be subversive and disruptive to a hierarchical authority determined to manage and keep under control the emotional content of the work—for fear that it would spill over and become uncontained and unmanageable.

This is a strong argument for a bottom-up approach to change and innovation. For example, St Augustine's Hospital near Canterbury

in Kent was an earlier example of an institution that was resistant to criticism. However, a postdoctoral chemistry student from the nearby University of Kent was supporting his studies by working as a nursing assistant and brought a beginner's mind to the hospital practices that went unremarked as professional practices. With a nursing colleague he recorded seventy instances of abuse, neglect, and degrading treatment of patients, but the hospital authorities, medical and nursing and administrative, refuted their complaints. The student persisted and took his case to the Secretary of State for Health, who ordered an inquiry, which finally upheld the criticisms (South East Thames RHA, 1976). There was, however, no disciplinary action taken against any senior staff as a result of the inquiry.

The many anecdotes of some business leaders—and copy-cat public sector managers—throwing tantrums like small children, suggest that narcissistic leadership works best in a culture of short-termism (Hirschhorn, 1997; Stein, 2011) where leaders move on before their mistakes catch up with them or are generously compensated if events overtake them.

It has been true throughout history that followers tolerate bad behaviour in their leaders, who are even perversely admired as “gods behaving badly”—the Greek gods providing powerful examples from classical mythology, with a Professor from London Business School calling them “gods of management” (Handy, 1978). Distributed leadership, like servant leadership with its ethical constructs, is not visibly potent in the same way, despite the evidence that it is more effective (Bradbury & Moyes, 2012).

We may still learn from the work of Isabel Menzies Lyth, not only for what she said, but also how this was heard and not heard. Her celebrated theory on the social defences of nursing (Menzies, 1960) was severely criticised at the time and has had limited impact on nursing management since. What in her theory was so difficult to work with and, in the end, unacceptable for those in positions of leadership to implement the insights of her work?

If managers have survived and thrived by their capacity to distance themselves from their previous clinical practice and the stress of intimate relations with the sick and dying in the care, their leadership is not likely to be supportive to the novitiate nurse experiencing this intimacy for the first time and learning to respond to a natural distress at the suffering of others (Dartington, A., 1993).

There is the sad possibility to consider, that those most able to sustain their capacity to respond to need in a compassionate way may have the greater difficulty in rising to the top in public sector management. But the vulnerable are in trouble if the powerful regress defensively to an omnipotent state of mind.

There are attitudes of mind in the public domain that actively favour an insensitivity in the management of others. For example, politicians may seem to link insensitivity to potency, and this is then taken up strongly in public sector management. So Oliver Letwin is reported to have said it was only through "some real discipline and some fear" that excellence could be achieved in the public sector. "You can't have room for innovation and the pressure for excellence without having some real discipline and some fear on the part of the providers that things may go wrong if they don't live up to the aims that society as a whole is demanding of them," he told a meeting at KPMG, in 2011 (*The Observer*, 31 July 2011). Sir Michael Wilshaw, Chief Inspector of Schools, said in 2012: "If anyone says to you that 'staff morale is at an all-time low' you know you are doing something right." Wilshaw, himself a successful teacher and headmaster, pronounced that in future a school with a satisfactory report would be considered to be unsatisfactory. Such distortion of language, identified by George Orwell in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as "newspeak", is not uncommon. When words change their meaning in this way, we may look for a flexing of the iron fist in the velvet glove!

The word asylum is an example of the process, where a word often does not just have one meaning, or even two or three. There is often a process of transition, so that different meanings may overlap and then separate. In the story of institutional care—when we look at what we mean by asylum—we can see the process by which care becomes cruel. Asylum in its classical sense has the meaning of place of safety, and perhaps it still does in the mind of the contemporary asylum seeker. Over two hundred years of care of the mentally ill the asylum has become synonymous with a warehousing model of incarceration, subject to Goffman's (1961) sociological critique of the total institution and Foucault's (1995) political focus on the panopticon, on normalization through observation, or, colloquially, the loony bin, where society dumps its unwanted citizens.

Asylum seekers themselves do not find asylum to be as safe as the word implies. They are treated with suspicion, thought to be "bogus" if they are too traumatised to talk about the torture and abuse they have

suffered in their own countries, and then accorded a sub-criminal status that denies them legal opportunity to take an active role in society. Those who work with them may then act out the brutalist fantasies of wider society.

Of course it does not have to be like that. I remember a compassionate social services manager, who rejected the job title of officer-in-charge. He found this offensive to the culture he wanted to encourage around meeting the support needs of residents with severe physical disabilities. He pursued a policy of "open government", with residents taking responsibility for their own actions, although he remained accountable to the local authority (Dartington, Miller, & Gwynne, 1981).

An efficiency model of care does not allow for vulnerability, fear of dependency, the need for positive containment, for autonomy and self-authorising in response to need (Cooper & Lousada, 2005). In a study of the inter-agency relations to do with services for the elderly mentally infirm, my hypothesis was that the intractable problems associated with dependency in old age were too much for one agency to take on as its primary activity—but that a collective effort was being attempted by different agencies, for whom this was not their primary but an associated task, and within each agency there were those for whom this was their primary focus. This led me to consider collaboration as essentially deviant at a systemic level, but essential at the emotive practitioner level (Dartington, T., 1986).

I later pursued this approach further through a series of workshops on collaboration in community care. The experiential evidence was that collaboration, if it was to be effective, was ninety per cent preparation and ten per cent engagement; that many collaborative projects failed, because they attempted the engagement without the necessary preparation. Also, those who were committed to making collaborative relationships work were potentially outsiders in their own organisations, as they were acting in a way that was deviant to the organisation's primary activity. This is a dynamic that I have observed enacted also in Tavistock group relations conferences, where intergroup activity involves, first, representation of a base group and, also, then the taking of authority in relation to an emergent issue—which may then be seen as a betrayal or undermining of the base group's own identity and purpose. Group relations conferences, in the Tavistock tradition of experiential conferences on authority and leadership (Brunner, Nutkevitch, & Sher, 2006; Miller, 1989) have, over the years, become

less hierarchical and more relational in the design and application, but this has not diminished for participants the shock of learning in the roles they take up that the underlying dynamics of group behaviour very often include a struggle for identity that leads to the enactment of unconscious cruelty and betrayal.

The concept of motivation has become distorted over the years, becoming a pragmatic instrument to influence employee behaviour, rather than integral to the meaning of work (Sievers, 2011). I have always been interested in managing by enthusiasms (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986) because this emphasis on authority comes from the task (for example, in the management of a cricket club or an allotment society). I now see how enthusiasm is necessary even within formal hierarchical systems like those of the NHS, in order to achieve significant results (generous to others) that were not primary to that organisation's objectives (survival on its own terms). In an action research study of the psychological needs of small children, the ward sister recounted how she had to unlearn everything that she had been taught: at the same time she was so enthused by the nature of the work she had no wish to be promoted from her hands-on responsibilities for the patients in her care.

An instrumental view of motivation is linked with the fragmentation of work into discrete tasks, distancing the care worker from what we might like to think of as the mission of the organisation. Think, in contrast, of the janitor at NASA who, when asked by president Clinton what he did, replied that he was helping to put a man on the moon. Think of the hospital cleaner then, who believes that she is there to help to make people better. These are examples given by Ballat and Campling (2011) in their argument for intelligent kindness in the delivery of care. But managers may discourage such enthusiasm as leading to indiscretion and ill-discipline as well as criticising staff for "acting above their station". This acts against any expression of a capacity for grass roots innovation, although this is often an overt organisational goal of employee engagement.

A determined separation of the personal from the professional severely restricts the reparative motivation that underpins much public service. "Don't get involved" is the message. I encountered at first hand this splitting of personal experience from professional judgement when describing my experience of palliative care at home for someone with dementia. These subjective and personal observations were informed by the research that I had done in the past, and the bringing

together of my previous research and the immediate experience of being with someone with dementia was a unique opportunity—if that is the word—for informal action research on the dynamics, psychological and systemic, of managing vulnerability (T. Dartington, 2010). However, I discovered unconsidered difficulties in integrating the personal and the professional: these were worlds, I found, that were meant to be kept apart. When I took part, with a psychiatrist and a nurse, in an integrated presentation at a palliative care research conference, the chairman surprised us by suddenly announcing that he would not be taking questions and went instead for an early lunch. My conclusion was that the integration of the personal and the professional would lead to a foregrounding of subjective experience and challenge the assumptions of a supposed objectivity of analytic thought.

From these experiences, I would now like to think more about the challenge of managing vulnerability. We think about getting the right people to do the job—who can demonstrate a capacity for empathy and compassion—and we think about giving the right training to meet objectives. We construct management systems, including inspection and audit to guard and control against abuse and incompetence. But there is another area of concern which is neglected—this has to do with managing the conditions for doing good work, ensuring that the boundary conditions are in place to allow for the stressful therapeutic engagement with the distress of others. It is in the nature of the work that it is stressful. Denial of that fact is always going to be defensive and dysfunctional.

The research evidence is that we respond reactively to opportunities that are presented to us. If we are encouraged to be oppressive to others, we are likely to be more oppressive than we may ordinarily think ourselves to be. The notorious Milgram experiments showed this, when volunteers thought they were delivering severe electric shocks causing pain to others and were persuaded to continue; and the Stanford Prison experiment, where students were randomly assigned roles as prisoners and guards and responded with such cruelty that the project had to be abandoned. Of course, regulation and controls and management supervision are all important. The philosopher Julian Baggini, who uses the above examples as part of his questioning of a belief in an essential self, also notes that the atrocities carried out at Abu Ghraib prison took place on the night shift, where there was not any supervision by senior officers (Baggini, 2011). And conversely, if there are opportunities to

show empathy and compassion, we may again surprise ourselves, this time by our generosity of spirit (Gilbert, 2009). This happens in much family care, and this is also a lesson to take from the history of the hospice movement. Relevant to this is the emergence of Schwartz Center Rounds, an approach which originated at Massachusetts General Hospital in the United States to bring together professionals involved in the care of patients and giving them the opportunity to reflect on the human aspects of care, bringing attention also to the inhumane aspects of care that may otherwise go unnoticed or unremarked by those in caring roles. This initiative has been supported in the UK by the King's Fund, an independent health think-tank, and its Point of Care programme (Goodrich & Cornwell, 2008). Schwartz Center Rounds are often led by clinical psychologists, who choose the theme of each meeting, and as this process takes place regularly in a hospital it allows the staff who volunteer their attendance to share and learn from an honest examination of their own practice. The essence of this approach is to bring back compassion into care.

If we follow this line of argument, we just cannot say that this person is mean and that is generous. Of course, everyone has responsibility for their own actions, but you cannot expect them to exercise their generosity more than their meanness if they feel they are also being treated in a mean way. All of this is common sense, supported by psychological experiments over the years. So what do we expect to happen if the people who are in caring roles are angry, fearful, feel unloved? And what in the work context is likely to make people feel angry, fearful, unloved? We can even predict that a management culture that takes little or no account of these things is going to run into trouble.

There is both a clinical purpose and a social purpose in the provision of care. The clinical need is observed and determined through the social perspective. A societal message of indifference to the needs of vulnerable people requires a strong response, or we will find it being acted out in clinical indifference. As a newspaper headline put it, "Our market-shaped way of life has no time for the elderly or the art of caring." Madeleine Bunting wrote: "... this cultural pattern of marketization is so cruel: it makes shameful what is an inescapable part of human experience. It denigrates and belittles the qualities needed to care, such as patience and gentleness" (*The Guardian*, 17 October 2011). In a letter to the same newspaper, the chair of a local Age Concern described the consequences of a policy of indifference: "The move to restrict home

care to those with critical needs means that only those in serious and even life-threatening difficulties will get help."

To counter this tendency, there is a need to sustain in different contexts—hospital, care homes, community projects, hospices—what we may describe as a mini-society of compassionate values, which is resistant to wider societal projections of lack of worth.

If we accept that the bad apple argument just does not work as a sufficient explanation for systemic abuse, how do we find a way not to turn a blind eye? A report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that only half the older people, their family, and friends, were satisfied with their home care in their survey. Councils restricting visits to fifteen minutes, not heating food for reasons of health and safety—these are obvious management failings for which the lowly paid care workers take the blame. A local authority manager admitted to ageist attitudes: "You wouldn't think twice about younger people getting a lot of support around social interaction—for older people, there's no way on earth we could afford to or we'd really have the inclination to do that", for example, give the same level of support as that offered to those of working age.

And it is because of these attitudes and policies that people are in care homes and hospitals, where they don't want to be—where, again, the care is often inadequate and unacceptable, the effects of an unexamined culture of indifference.

There is an NHS survey of hospital staff, which invites the comment, "If a friend or relative needed treatment, I would be happy with the standard of care." Survey results found a positive response to be as low as forty per cent in some parts of the country. In Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust, with its record of recent failures of care, it was fifty per cent. Audit and inspection are necessary but not sufficient and are not in themselves therapeutic processes. These are conditions that would favour the insights of action research, working with the experience of those who are delivering the care and looking to access the therapeutic content of every interaction with the patient (Savage, Widdowson, & Wright, 1979). Involving those who are able to relate directly with vulnerable people in different contexts and reversing the dehumanising processes of policies and procedures implemented without insight—creating a local economy of care—is itself therapeutic and very different from an external threat of an uncaring inspection. This is the containing function of management, providing a space for those doing the stressful work of

care to work with their own issues of identity, including the struggle with feelings they may have of low self esteem and self-worth through their exposure to the vulnerability of others.

In the UK dementia is estimated to cost society £19 billion a year, but it does not cost the NHS anything like that. NHS continuing care—free at the point of delivery—is “awarded” grudgingly, for example, when care is being provided at home and may even be withdrawn later, when the patient becomes even more dependent. This is a culture of systemic indifference fuelled by economic stringency and taking on a tragic dimension in its impact on individual lives. Much of the burden is on informal systems of care, which are not regulated and controlled. And those financing and managing the NHS are resentful about what it does cost—for the patients who neither die nor get better are considered “bed blockers”, less a clinical challenge than a management issue. It is true enough that hospital is no place you want to be unless you really have to be there. The Health Services Ombudsman (2011) has described “an attitude—both personal and institutional—which fails to recognise the humanity and individuality of the people concerned and to respond to them with sensitivity, compassion and professionalism.” Sarah Pickup, President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, has said: “The challenge is that the workforce is trained to understand and support people with dementia with compassion and dignity.” But without a change of management culture an emphasis on training is not going, in itself, to make a sufficient difference. I would argue for a new emphasis on the containing function of management, so that the workforce is managed in a way that allows for understanding and support of people with dementia and others, whose long-term needs are not going to go away through a succession of heroic (and brief) interventions. This would lead to a renewed appreciation of the importance of continuity and consistency of care, with a stoical as well as a heroic response to need.

From the perspective of the vulnerable person, carers may be characterised as busybodies and mediators. “The busybodies reinforce the sense that my choices are becoming less my own. I don’t want to be case worked ... I have a very different experience with the carers that are mediators. The mediators work with me in negotiating the world on my own terms” (Dartington, A., 2010). Even the most vulnerable are not really passive in the relationship—communication by projective identification sees to that. Sometimes there is collusion with systems

that exploit and abuse their vulnerability. "I don't want to trouble you, doctor." There is resistance that is counter-productive and incurs a greater risk of abuse—the so-called "challenging" patient or client. Vulnerable people may also develop coping mechanisms of their own, for example, by being a "character" as a way of asserting one's humanity and seeking to avoid the dehumanising cruelty of care systems. This is the last hurrah of the heroic defence, bearing up courageously against impossible odds.

Societal expectations of the good life, based on a consumerist model of well-being, do not make it easier for the vulnerable. If the distribution of power in society favours the fantasy of omnipotence at the top and impotence at the bottom, then the failure of that omnipotent myth and the resultant economic failures leaves those most disadvantaged to face disproportionately the costs of austerity. Cuts in welfare services are then justified in the language of re-ablement, emphasising the potential for independence even amongst the most dependent: this is part of the language of opportunity that has replaced what is seen as a dependency-inducing culture of welfare rights. The idea that elderly people have become dependent because of all the care they have been getting is just not plausible. Rather, it is our own fear of dependency that makes the vulnerable even more so, as they are being unconsciously punished for reminding us relentlessly of our own fragility and mortality.

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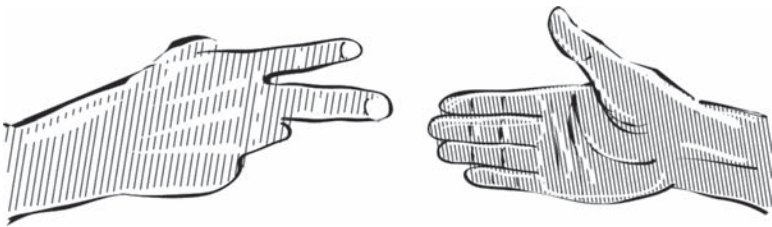
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PART II

POWER AND VULNERABILITY IN THE POLITICAL ARENA



CHAPTER SIX

Inspirational leadership: Hitler and Gandhi—avoiding the corrosive power of corruption

Elisabeth Henderson

Power, leadership, and vulnerability form an interesting triangle. Ai Weiwei, the dissident Chinese artist, in a BBC3 interview (October 2011), a man of no status but immense international influence, reflected that leveraging his immense paradoxical power of influence was grounded on his life of personal risk and vulnerability: “My powerfulness is based ... um ... on ... fragility ...”

Can willingness to accept the reality of personal vulnerability act as a deterrent to the corruptive energy and agency of absolute power?

Introduction

This chapter explores the three elements of inspirational leadership, power, and vulnerability through the life, first, of an extraordinary man on the world stage, Gandhi. He did not succeed in his ambitions yet, in other ways, achieved monumentally. His approach is contrasted with another famous and inspirational leader—Hitler—who in the end fell by his own hubris, unable to achieve or outlive what he hoped to do.

The aim is to explore the contrast between Gandhi and Hitler, in their interpretation and the objectives of their “inspirational leadership”, and to study the implications of their relevance to our own time.

As Warren Bennis says:

“Leadership” is a word on everyone’s lips. The young attack it and the old grow wistful for it. Parents have lost it and police seek it. Experts claim it and artists spurn it, while scholars want it. If bureaucrats pretend they have it politicians wish they did. Everyone agrees there is less of it than there used to be. The matter now stands as Mr. Wildman thought it did in 1648: “Leadership hath been broken into pieces.” (Bennis & Nanus, 1985)

The crisis of inspirational leadership is critical for us as citizens. We need clear judgement with support to develop antennae for identifying when our values are being manipulated towards solutions incompatible with our essential beliefs.

Bennis further develops the issue of the crisis of leadership:

The need was never so great. A chronic crisis of governance—that is the pervasive incapacity of organizations to cope with the expectations of their constituents—is an overwhelming factor worldwide. (Bennis & Nanus, 1985)

Gandhi and Hitler, my two examples, were both “large-scope” men who responded to the chronic crisis of governance—differently. Both developed as leaders who inspired their respective countries, due to the “void and the darknesses”. The question is why—or how—so differently?

Both mobilised the idealism of huge swathes of people. The heart of the issue is how their leadership reflected the concepts of national justice and the differential interpretations of “fairness” each employed.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the ways in which “inspirational leadership” functions to create outcomes, how it affects the very mind-set of civic dialogue, and focuses national ambition and the culture of a people—for good or for ill. The reason for doing so, rather than immediately discussing entrepreneurial, professional, or organisational leadership, is to reflect on our need for leaders in the public arena to inspire us to act “the best we can be” in challenging times. The notion of inspiration is just as significant for us in our daily life and work, because we all are leaders at different levels and in different settings. We need to deploy choice in our self-authorisation in role.

One issue is whether Gandhi—or Hitler—are too “outsized” as persons for us to learn from. My own view is that here the extreme case accentuates qualities that might be more difficult to see ordinarily.

Theoretical background

The focus of this chapter will primarily be on Gandhi whose emphasis on personal development for his leadership will be contrasted to Hitler's. I study the personal and political impact of Gandhi's painfully achieved ongoing spiritual and psychologically integrative work on his own persona, and its link to the content of his inspirational values and his transformative philosophy of inclusiveness. Hitler, like Gandhi, identified with the expression of desire of an oppressed people but, unlike Gandhi, located all badness and degeneration outside himself in hate-filled externalisation, endowing the principle of freedom as meaning the power to enforce a strident reversal of the oppressed/oppressor national position.

Implicit in the contrast between these two men is the idea that they occupy different points in a psychoanalytic developmental model of the personality, which includes the bases for the capacity for empathy with another person. In my view, this model converges with Adam Kahane's writings on organisations, in the course of which he distinguishes between two different kinds of power: “power-over” as opposed to “power-to”. Before returning to the contrasts between Hitler and Gandhi, I begin by outlining this background theoretical framework (Kahane, 2007).

Melanie Klein (1946; Bott Spillius, Milton, Garvey, Couve, & Steiner, 2011) distinguishes the paranoid-schizoid position,—in which the main anxiety concerns survival of the self—from the depressive position—in which the main anxiety concerns the survival of loved and precious figures. She suggests that the move from the one to the other depends on the particular personality and experiences of the individual, but also—importantly in terms of this paper—on the degree and nature of the emotional support available in childhood and later adult life. In the paranoid-schizoid position, the individual relies on splitting and projection, so that bad aspects of the self are located in others, with a consequent fear of retaliatory danger from them. Coming from another theoretical background (Adorno et al, 1950) also emphasised the importance of the projection of “badness” for the so-called “authoritarian

personality", as seen in the hugely authoritarian space of national domination that Hitler required for himself.

The depressive position implies an individual being able to take personal responsibility for the felt badness of aspects of the self, to tolerate the guilt and sadness that this entails, partly due to a hope of being able to make reparation.

With Gandhi, engagement in the depressive position went one step further. Later I review his leadership intention as a "depressive position strategy". He attempted to deal with the real persecutory splits of national conflict, rampage, and fighting through promoting a national value of empathy. This appears to be a socially negotiated, national version of the depressive position, mediated by and linked to his personal leadership.

Sometimes, for whatever reason, it is impossible to tolerate either the overwhelming fears concerning survival that characterise the paranoid-schizoid position or the guilt and (temporary) hopelessness of the depressive position. One widespread way of dealing with this is by means of a so-called "pathological organisation" (Rosenfeld, 1971; Steiner, 1993).

Ron Britton's well-known 1989 paper in *The Oedipus Complex Today* describes the achievement possible through healthy resolution of oedipal rivalry. It provides glimpses of a crossover concept between psychodynamic and systems thinking and the developmental interplay in-between them.

Britton suggests that the family triangle provides the child with links that connect him separately with each parent. It also confronts the small child with links that exclude—in particular the one between the parents of which the child is not an integral part. A third position can come into existence that provides us all with a capacity for seeing ourselves in interaction with others, for "entertaining another point of view from our own, whilst retaining our own, for reflecting on ourselves, whilst being ourselves" (Britton, Feldman, & O'Shaughnessy, 1989, p. 87).

In my view, this calibre of relational and emotional maturity, learnt in the family, contributes to the type of dynamic mindset that allows for action based on a commitment to systemic thinking in real life.

In *Experiences in Groups* (Bion, 1998) W. R. Bion outlined some of the primitive strivings that can interfere with the wishes of group members to focus on the task at hand. Instead of a "work group", they may then constitute themselves as one of a number of different "basic assumption

groups", which function to alleviate the participants' anxieties rather than to perform work in a way that takes account of reality. Such basic assumption groups include the dependency, fight/flight, and pairing modes of behaviour, and also a different fourth group: the sophisticated work group. This thinking makes it easy to identify Hitler as a "flight/fight group" leader. In contrast Gandhi's social and national leadership is more difficult to define. He modified populist "basic assumptions" into a generative, national, civic ethic which demonstrated a new method of pursuing the task-focus.

I believe that these formulations converge with Adam Kahane's organisational approach, which distinguishes the nature of power between "power-over" and "power-to". He sees the effect of absence of love on the outcomes of instrumental implementation, and analyses both the positive potential outcomes and the challenges of action fuelled by the generative or degenerative aspects of either love or power.

"Power-over" is an approach that concentrates on ensuring that objectives are met. Essentially this involves expertise, skill, and focus, and can lead to emphasis on personal mastery and self-sufficiency. Its danger is of a degenerative slide into an attitude of "possession" and control of territory alongside personal self-aggrandisement. This can be characterised by vested ownership over "production and delivery" with control of decisions, resources, and ideas.

"Power-to" develops dialogue, uses inputs, wisdom, and perspective from all those involved in the outcome of the decision. It enhances the capacity of the participants to think through the meaning and purpose of all those making different contributions with different vested interests. Simultaneously and in parallel it generates capacity in the members, and groups of leaders, to use empathy, forgoing some of their own points of view in favour of resolution for the good of the whole. It develops new and emergent thinking, leading to new cycles of this resolution.

This understanding of "power-over" and "power-to" may be thought of in terms of the ultimate contrast between paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions—the degree to which a leader is able to empathise with and value the perspective of others, as opposed to being driven to impose his own in a way that depends on the demonisation of groups seen as inferior (Kahane, 2007).

In the next sections I discuss ways in which Gandhi and Hitler lived out their psychological and political destinies. Later, I turn to explore

the depth of continuous investment Gandhi made in preparing himself for leadership—and I review the return of that investment for others.

The contrasting appeal of Hitler and Gandhi

Hitler and Gandhi had many circumstances in common and were divided only by a few years. Both captured the soul of their people, or, at least, a critical mass of the people most of the time. Both confronted poverty, forms of national bondage, loss of civil rights and entitlement. They appealed to self-sacrifice, justice in righting wrongs for both individuals and the nation. Both had mission, vision, strength, and charisma.

Both held up to the light a vision and desire for a future that did not as yet exist—a future which, at that point, had little potential for being enacted. Each illuminated its possibility. They acted as a charismatic, focal emblem for others to cohere around, personally and ideologically.

Hitler, in the German case, spoke to the humiliation and resentment of the people to the chaotic and crippling economic turmoil and financial disaster after the highly punitive settlement by the Allies following the First World War. Like Gandhi, he appealed to the essence of the national soul. In the German setting this evoked a profound sense of honour and territory, sacrifice and duty, entitlement and superiority in terms of the destiny of the German people in the 1930s and 40s.

Schism or inclusion: Hitler, borrowing an age-old over-arching racial myth recently revived in America by Madison Grant, identified “goodness” as an inherent quality belonging to the race. “Evil” was externally located in an inferior people who needed to be eradicated. Goodness, in his view, meant destroying, cleansing the stain, the parasite, externally—leaving a humiliated, supposedly innately superior people free to live out their destiny. Justification for revenge was energised by victimhood, in the “unfairness of Germany being treated as inferior” by the Allies (Grant, 2011).

Hitler’s response was the ultimate in terms of “power-over” the German people, inculcating in them a belief in their own “power-over” a cascade of inferior peoples. He pursued a definition of the “best” that depended on others being “worse”. Mobilising followers through this ethic lent credence to a deeper shared belief: that the world cannot be kept safe without retaliatory or strategic, pre-emptive strikes.

Gandhi took a diametrically opposite view. He saw his mission as educating and leading the moral purpose of his enemies as much as of his followers. His ethic of justice in the face of oppression transcended splitting and he focused on the transformational politics of empathy and justice. He is reported as saying to the British Viceroy that the Indian Congress would “not submit to this injustice [of British oppression]—not merely because it is destroying us, but because it is destroying you as well”.

Hitler identified himself as the ultimate authority, making the entire German military swear allegiance to him and him alone, rather than to the state, whereas, in his daily life, Gandhi identified with the oppressed and their living conditions. Clearly, Hitler employed the human tendency towards splitting and Gandhi embodied an equally human drive towards inclusion and integration.

The key question I address is what can we learn for ourselves from the circumstances, personal disciplines, and ongoing practice that underpinned Gandhi’s life and leadership? What does it take to stay humane and to take a nation with you in that quest?

The history of Gandhi’s ideas

How did such a reputedly ordinary man transform himself, stand and fight alone against the greatest empire of the time, and win—without firing a shot? In contrast, Hitler’s apprenticeship seems only to have been a chance to exercise the power of his particular style of oratory; he lived out the logic of his own personality in public. Gandhi built on his and refined it though investment in his own self-development.

Gandhi began his career as an inadequate young lawyer hardly able to stutter his brief in court due to self-consciousness. His preoccupation with performance fell away when a wider, deeper clarity and focus was activated by a passion for justice and righting wrongs for Indians in South Africa. Returning to India, his contemporaries expected him to go straight into politics to capitalise on the personal reputation he had created abroad. Instead, a group of senior Indians urged him to undergo a personal apprenticeship of self-subordination in order to expose himself to the deeper realities of India. He submerged himself in the countryside, walking on his own for months, exploring the poverty-stricken, sometimes dangerous, agricultural hinterland.

This apprenticeship experience confronted him with the suffering of the peasants and their material conditions, the feudal and caste systems, and the local-colonial politics. The raw and indisputable experience gained in this way both humbled and informed him about the situation that faced the Indian sub-continent in quite a different way from city politicians, concerned with the politics of power. His personal direction changed fundamentally, away from the notion of being a powerful hero-politician.

He began, instead, to identify not with his own class or caste, but with a greater reality, the ministry towards the mass of the people and their condition. In doing so, he developed a lifetime practice of taking “strategic authority for the cleanliness of his intentions” and followed up his youthful apprenticeship in the countryside with a continuous discipline of self-subordination.

Gandhi's discipline of self-preparation

Gandhi described his life as an “experiment in truth”. For him, the highest calling for human beings was a strategic practice of expanding the human capacity to love. His ability to do this was grounded in a number of personal disciplines including the practice of meditation. His daily life was characterised by a lifetime investment in:

- Taking strategic authority for his own self-development.
- The discipline of personal apprenticeship and self-subordination.
- Living in community.
- Choosing freedom from fear of loss and death.

For Gandhi the starting place was himself. He began with the discipline of introspection and detachment through the medium of meditation. He said of himself that through this “... one enters the deepest levels of consciousness where the storms of deep-seated conflicts rage continuously night and day. It is at these awesome depths that love wrestles with anger and fear and ultimately gains mastery over all other feelings” (Gandhi, 2001).

Gandhi sought inspiration—sanity, relevance, information, and laughter—in the give and take of communal living in an Ashram community. He lived there for most of his active leadership—whenever he was neither in prison nor on a campaign (both of these providing their own form of community).

Unlike Hitler, he was never isolated and cut off from his people, in a separate, rarefied atmosphere. His life was an investment in the practice of belonging. He lived close to, and in much the same conditions as, those he served—the vast mass of the poor of India—and was party to all the ordinary little happenings of daily life in a community.

Nehru as head of the emerging Congress Party, famously describing this paradoxical way of living, said that “never has so much money been spent to keep someone living in poverty”. Leaders are always expensive to their nation—the advantage for his nation was that unlike Hitler, Gandhi’s views, life, and leadership ideas were grounded in interaction with the life and realities of others.

Freedom from fear

Throughout his life, when violence erupted, Gandhi literally walked to the war-torn territories. He chose to go alone, walking from village to village, exposing himself like a magnet, for terrified opponents to give up their mutual slaughter, one faith group by the other. He understood the national reverence for himself, so strategically put his own life on the line through a hunger strike, to convey the severity of his opinion that the choices enacted by the nation lacked integrity—and was indeed heard. His openness and disregard of death in bringing others to more humane positions acted as an emotional and systemic moral interpretation of the need for reconciliation.

Did Gandhi die for his cause? He was murdered—yet Gandhi did not so much die for his cause, nor require comrades or enemies to die in its service, as live for it. What he was concerned with was living—with so little personal defensive self-protection of the self and the ego, either physically or psychically, there was always the possibility of death.

Is inspirational leadership in itself morally neutral?

With this dedication to self-development and purification how do we understand the differences in inspirational leadership as demonstrated between Gandhi and Hitler?

Quite literally, the word “inspiration” is grounded in its etymology: to breathe into, to animate—bring to life—or motivate the other, usually with the inference that one should be the best one can be. It links creativity to generativity. It develops connection between followers in

the creation of a community that communicates and shares common values. Leadership may be thought to stir up the norms of communication, thus defining the way the community operates.

The critical, moral, non-neutral question is over the content and objective of inspirational leadership. The problem is that inspiration can be perverse. Some may then prefer to call it by another name, such as charisma or demagoguery. I prefer to think of this as, more precisely, a perverse form of inspiration—perverse in its deceptiveness and dishonesty in suborning the idealism of followers.

Hitler's ability to "inspire" commonly held and valued national virtues with primitive and vicious qualities in their implementation gives us insight into the nature of political perversity. He attached life-giving values of hope onto outcomes normally seen as abusive and vice-ridden, blurring and confusing popular judgement so that the negative was then even further detached from the vice.

The approach to Germany's economic rehabilitation in the 1930s did not link old models of patriotism and national heritage to new ways of developing national recovery. Love of country was suffused with and projected into a drive of righteous persecution of inferior races and detractors; economic recovery was equated with entitlement, territorial expansion, invasion, and the spoils of war. Fighting for freedom and justice was "managed" triumphally as a retaliatory blame mechanism, by collapsing moral honour into the practice of domination.

Hitler has never been alone on the world stage in this. Stalin, overtly his arch-enemy but secretly also his partner, specialised in manipulating lofty ideals and ideas into a similar tool of mass murder of his own people.

A different illustration of value-perversion may be seen in the example of Margaret Thatcher ascribing "greed" to the UK electorate as an animating value for economic recovery. The clean, neutral underlying values for economic productivity (ambition, thrift, resilience, and hard work) were subsumed under an implied virtue of individualist devaluation of others in getting more for yourself—more than is fair. Vice creeps in at the intersection where the welfare of the others is deemed as being of less or no consequence. Perversity lies in the way that a half-truth is linked to falsehood.

The difference in the nature of inspiration appears to be dependent on the leader's specific view of power and willingness to manipulate the electorate.

The perverse inspirational leader appears to have an intuitive “nose” for the mix of desire and despair—the vulnerability—of the people and their willingness to be seduced into morally suspect disdain for others, in return for their own survival or gain.

This allows the leader the opportunity to put his own attitudes into others—whether people understand that this is happening or not. At the end of the thirties Hitler was revered by millions, who saw what we now see as his perverse and dark charisma as the embodiment of Germany’s defender, warrior, and saviour, leading them to their highest calling out of his love for them and their love for him. In old films it looks ecstatic, if not hypnotic.

The choice of transformational leadership as Gandhi practiced it, involved little personal impression management. His oratory meshed medium or style with the message. His intention was to enable others to think their own thoughts in order to commit to their choice of action. His national centrality as a moral role model for ideas and action empowered his listeners to transform their own behaviour, transcending previous levels.

These two leaders exemplify a power difference in leadership intention. The extent to which inspiration is perverse or transcendent is seen in the degree to which the follower is enabled to think his own thoughts and make his own choices. In short, the critical personal question—for us as leaders—is whether it is “our creativity and ownership as leader, or the creativity and ownership of followers that is enhanced.”

*The nature of power differences: the distinction
between power-over and power-to*

Power-over

Danger in the absolute power, absolute corruption conundrum lies in the tendency Adam Kahane describes of a degenerative slide into an attitude of “possession” and control, personal self-aggrandisement, characterised by fierce proprietorship in control of decisions, resources, and ideas (Kahane, 2007).

Ideas are, in fact, the significant resource. They justify the choice and use of other resources and processes. “Power-over the idea” builds an animating power over national culture and dialogue—taking debate away from others who contribute to the system but disagree.

The dangerous side of control lies in the confusion of personal ego with leadership status. Those at the top can be stimulated into a profoundly un-systemic political fantasy. With Hitler, it led to his self-deluding forms of impression management that power over others and control of ideas can operate long-term—as he said, for a thousand year Reich—in isolation from the system of those who can give critical feedback.

All of this is depressingly familiar and not entirely limited to the last century.

At this point, it would be easy to condense the discussion with a few insights, such as mass enactment of splitting and primitive psychotic group behaviour. It is clear that Hitler epitomised the large-group characteristics of fight/flight leader as described by Bion. What is more difficult—and perhaps far more important—is to explore the generative component and transformational nature of Gandhi's leadership. Another way of putting this is to ask: how was Gandhi able to mobilise a nation around characteristics that Bion describes and that we might call the content of the sophisticated work group (Bion, 1998)?

Power-to

In many ways Gandhi was the ultimate exponent of power-to. For him power was the energy of human connection, generating task and outcomes. Such leadership works through influence. It is deeply collegial in quality. Power-to develops added value and distributing creativity up, down, and along the line. It is clearly inspirational, though not necessarily charismatic. Love, however, can be sloppy and sentimental so that the rigour of leadership depends on personal discipline to ensure that power does not degenerate but stays focused on task.

The status of the generative leader is defined by adherence to the task rather than by ego considerations. The “means” of action are as important as the “ends”, in the sense, as Gandhi always insisted, that the desired right end-state does not appear unless generated by right means and allegiances.

The different views of power developed by Hitler and Gandhi are illustrated in the way each bound their followers to them. In *The Night of Long Knives* (Gallo & Emmet, 1974), on the basis of rivalry to himself, Hitler eliminated Röhm and his crony Brown-shirts by a series of assassinations. More significantly still, he deliberately ensured that all those

hoping to remain in his continuing circle of intimates were incriminated in the assassinations—so they were marked by having blood on their hands in a Mafia-like pact with their leader.

In contrast, Gandhi allowed long periods of “apprenticeship”, talking for years with those interested in non-violent resistance, ensuring they knew the cost. Yet once committed to the non-violent movement, he expected their loyalty to be total, not, though, because they were in some kind of cult with him. At the point of joining, they would have internalised and installed the shared values to such a degree that they could enact—act as plenipotentiaries—and embody choices based on their own sense of initiative and personal authority (Henderson, 2012).

The power of vulnerability—deterrents to corrupting power

How does a leader remain untarnished by the corrosive nature of immense power and influence? What are the deterrents and conditions that prevent inspirational leadership degenerating into abuse?

An assumption that vulnerability acts as a deterrent to the corrosive corruptions of power may be a bit equivocal. The idea may represent a collapse of the concept of vulnerability to equate with ideas of humility and humanity. Popularly, however, vulnerability can be equated simply with being weak, inadequate or incompetent.

The wounds of vulnerability may themselves be incapacitating. Vulnerability can switch between numbness, dullness, or the acutely painful and anxious distortions of internal emotional relations that are disconnected or at war with each other. We may feel ourselves to be in a world where our behavioural splits and depressiveness are condemned rather than understood or valued. This then increases the sense of angst in letting pain or anxiety be seen. Vulnerability can lead to states of confusion rather than of growth.

It is possible that some who experience frailty may be humble and less likely to fall for the projections and introjections of omnipotence. However, this was certainly not the case with Hitler. Although he may have experienced vulnerability in terms of feeling fear and anxiety towards the end of his rule, when his world begun collapsing, he continued seeing other people as the problem. His vulnerability at this point only led him to continue to sacrifice, persecute, and dominate others further, so he was certainly not animated by identification with

humanity. Gandhi was identified with humanity, yet, I would suggest, was never vulnerable in the popular sense of being inadequate.

It is hard to see that personal vulnerability will safeguard the leader against the corruptions of power. Vulnerability in itself is not the same as wisdom. Vulnerability may, however, be a code for something much wider here.

In my view the critical issue is not, exactly, how we deal with weakness; rather, it is how we deal with pain. Hitler could not tolerate pain yet gladly subjected others to it. Gandhi internalised the pain and suffering of others as his rationale for service to his country.

Defencelessness

Gandhi's defencelessness was a mature adult decision to mirror the suffering of others. He gained self-awareness through facing and delving into the pain of his own internal emotional relations, the external suffering of others, and the question of his own agency in agonising situations.

In this sense, "vulnerability" was transposed into a poised and balanced choice of defencelessness in the face of being open to attack and intrusion. It was a considered mature choice. His practice of living without defences had real consequences. Whilst loving life, he never defended himself from danger and actively put his life to ransom in order to influence the national ethic.

Gandhi had a resolute dedication throughout his life to a practice of defencelessness and rigorous self-scrutiny, which was undertaken in the service of:

- Opening up his psychological and spiritual blindness.
- Healing splits and unresolved internal conflicts of personal engagement.
- Spiritual and psychological scrutiny over judgement and timing in the agonising choices of public leadership.

His commitment to life without defences was based on his sense that living and dying are not so very far from each other. As he said: "The art of dying follows as a corollary from the art of living."

My sense about Gandhi is that he was an exponent of a humane morality with a psychological base, an approach we might call the morality of the depressive position and the values of empathy.

“Depressive position” leadership

Did this rigorous self-scrutiny and defencelessness have a practical impact on outcomes for his leadership? Here is a sample of the choices he made from his uniquely moral and personal “depressive”—that is reparative and empathetic—position.

1. His refusal of victimhood

Gandhi negated all forms of victimhood. Unlike Hitler, he never exploited a popular sense of the unfairness of the past, even though he was ruthless in the pursuit of justice in the present for India.

Non-violence in the face of violence is the ultimate in terms of self-control and self-authorisation. Gandhi saw non-violence as essential to the political and moral outcome. This never looked like submissiveness. He was the master of the provocative act.

Gandhi’s self-reliant thinking outside the norm gave his leadership some of the aspects “for good” that can be seen “in negative” in a sociopath. He could come up with ideas so “out of the box” that they were unthinkable by others. He could always surprise and provoke. He lived so close to his unconscious that he would work out strategy in dreams and direct the national campaign according to moral time rather than “common-sense” time of others, to huge impact and effect.

2. He prioritised both “means” and “ends”

For Gandhi the non-violent movement was the only means for ending British colonial rule. The quality of the means for ridding India of Imperial domination was not secondary to the objective of change. He viewed the morality of non-violence as the real enactment in the present of the desired future state. Means and ends were co-equal parts of the same system. Ending colonial domination in this way was the only way he could envisage equipping the future state of India to be ready to act as an equal on the world stage.

3. He included the oppressors within the moral circle

Gandhi led the moral purpose of his enemies as much as he did that of his followers: “Unlike those who engage in violent action, we do not believe we should exclude the adversary from the solution. On the contrary, we try to transform the opponent, drawing him in as a participant and beneficiary of the solution—not as an enemy to be overcome but as a participant in the search for a truthful solution to conflict.”

4. He inspired generative principles for the autonomy of others

Gandhi was unafraid of inspiring, installing, and then cascading his values without compromise. His values were so strongly installed he could remain true to them even when his world was falling around him.

He upheld his principle of overturning injustice with justice in the face of overwhelming pressure. Over three million farmers in the state of Bengal starved to death during the Second World War as a direct consequence of crops being diverted from India to feed the British Army. Gandhi did not lead a campaign of revenge and retaliation towards the British. He led the same farmers to become co-initiators and authors of the path of national reconciliation in the later troubles.

5. He employed the power of symbols

Gandhi lived closely and openly to his unconscious as a master of the mutative symbol. He chose practical, disruptive symbols that created conscious and unconscious awareness—very like a therapeutic interpretation. The “March to the Sea” shows an idea that came to him, interestingly enough, in a dream. This story is an example of the quixotic yet purposeful thinking through which he changed the landscape of conflict between parties. It was as though he let his unconscious lead him to the borders of his conscious mind, until he experienced the moment as right and true for action.

6. In his own person he was a signal for changed behaviour

Gandhi’s genius in action was to lead both real and symbolic metaphors. He acted concretely in his own person to signify the moral meaning of action.

His personal exposure to danger functioned as a living interpretation to Hindus and Muslims at times of violence at Partition. Going to villages and suggesting that terrified opponents give up their mutual slaughter of one faith by the other functioned as a real-life symbol and a dynamic interpretation of a different possibility of co-existence and reconciliation.

7. His clarity of communication

In regarding life as an experiment with truth, Gandhi used meditation as a dynamic discipline to cleanse himself and liberate the spirit, integrating inner unity of the self. It had profound practical consequences.

When he negotiated with Churchill in London some reporters cornered his aide, Moraji Desai. They demanded to know: “How is

it that Gandhi is able to talk so well for so long without prompts?" Desai said: "What Gandhi thinks, what he feels, what he says and what he does, are all the same. He does not need notes." Then Desai added, (apparently smiling): "You and I, we think one thing, feel another, say a third, and do a fourth, so we need notes and files to keep track."

In his mission and vision, Gandhi appealed to similar values as did Hitler, but associated them with totally different meanings, transcending the emphasis on narcissistic self-aggrandisement shown by Hitler, as follows:

Sacrifice

For Gandhi, sacrifice was not heroic and triumphalist as it was for Hitler. Sacrifice was, however, intended to be morally provocative. Non-violence was never passive or submissive. It was designed to sting the British into seeing how they had abandoned the moral high ground. Gandhi created situation after situation in which the British behaved to the "inferior" Indian in ways of which the British themselves were ashamed. There are numerous stories of Indians sacrificing themselves to be beaten up without retaliation in order to develop reactive remorse in the oppressor.

Acceptance of complicity in goodness and evil

For Gandhi goodness and evil were always a present and indivisible reality inside the self. Evil was not externalised. His mission was to help people raise their moral aspiration in righting wrongs rather than taking and matching the abusive morals of an oppressor. Hundreds and thousands followed his principles, even to prison, so that in a sense the whole country created a critical mass of non-violent opposition, too powerful to be overlooked.

Creating the moral and inspirational environment that nurtured the cause,

Gandhi raised moral aspiration in a way that served to keep values alive. Hinduism had reached a low at the beginning of the century. Gandhi delved internally to re-establish for himself a living spirituality and to interpret to others its relevance. He linked spiritual and personal insight on how to evaluate justifiable action in the fight for freedom and created a culture of respect.

Facing pain along with power

Hitler identified with success and victory at all costs. Indeed, when Germany began to fail, losing the war, he began to infer that Germans were not the master race he had thought, and that he should have backed the Slavs. For him, success and domination were all. Loss and defeat were indigestible and unthinkable. His action in defeat was to sacrifice the nation alongside himself.

In contrast, Gandhi led the creation of the mentality of the new Indian State Republic in a way that continued to instil values of inclusion wherever possible.

Two perspectives

1. The psychological dynamic

It seems that those great inspirational “depressive position” strategic leaders have the power to enable others to focus on reconciliation, and generate capacity for creativity and courage in other people. Frequently, they have a number of experiences in common. Many of them—often without choice—spend long periods in isolation where they have to refrain from action and are forced inwards to focus on reflection. Space for reflection, evaluation, and self-scrutiny is a great incubator of a reflective future leadership style. Nelson Mandela is a perfect example of having been shaped by such a process.

Part of Gandhi’s genius was his profound understanding of the moral systems that promote transformation. Ron Britton (Britton, Feldman, & O’Shaughnessy, 1989) describes the function of “triangular space” as part of a resolution of oedipal relational conflicts. He suggests that it leads to the systemic possibility of being—at one and the same time—a participant in a relationship, whilst being observed by a third person, as well as being an observer of a relationship between two other people.

Gandhi, supremely, occupied this mental, systemic arena of “triangular space”. He saw, acted upon, and stood outside the ever-present power-dynamics. He understood the chaos, waywardness, and the sickness of both sides—the system of Empire and the freedom movement—as a whole and worked for the potential health and improvement of the entire system.

Occupying this “triangular space” in the mind allowed him to embrace, discriminate, digest, and forgive difference and dispute.

Gandhi thought systemically about what others needed in relation to each other, not merely to himself. Hitler was bound into a two-person dynamic of how the other was of use to him. His methodology was to divide and conquer. He could not tolerate non-dependent links between others, so built up a dependent system of divide, conquer, and fragment. This corroded and poisoned the relationships within his society and his work group.

2. The gang mentality or sophisticated work group

Psychologically, Gandhi had the capacity to inspire millions of a diverse people, in conflict with each other, to embrace a high moral code in a freedom struggle and to remain loyal and coherent in developing its vision.

He created a kind of mental “holding environment” for his followers and the public at large. This offered them an opportunity to grow developmentally and spiritually into adult partners within the operation of the new state of India on the world stage. This was in stark contrast to Hitler’s reductive reign of fear and gain.

Gandhi’s strength was that he provided the nation with the containing qualities, process, and content implicit in the nature of Bion’s sophisticated work group. He developed sophisticated understanding in others of their own complex mental models. He effected a large-scale dynamic amongst the people, challenging them to understand that in the liberation of India, they were free in needing to make sense of their choices and accountable for taking responsibility in the direction of change. They were asked to take responsibility individually for the community belonging to the freedom movement. Basically membership of the non-violent movement meant signing up to adult status and involvement. To me this admirably describes some of the qualities required for the operation of the sophisticated work group (Bion, 1998).

The inspirational quality of Gandhi’s leadership was essentially life-enhancing, as evidenced in his ability to build and hold the triangle of moral reconciliation between the warring parts of the nation for so long.

Hitler, on the other hand, fully embodies the idea of a “pathological organisation” of a state of a mind, lived out in public. (Rosenfeld, 1971; Steiner, 1993) describe this response to paranoid-schizoid anxieties: in this personality organisation, you can see the various

parts of the personality interacting in a way that is reminiscent of a Mafia-like gang doing the bidding of a gang leader—who promises an alternative world free from any of the anxieties that naturally arise in the course of relationships with other people. The appeal of such an organisation is heightened when life in the real world feels overwhelmingly painful; escaping from the organisation, however, like escaping from the Mafia, carries with it the disturbing threat of different yet definite punishment.

Hitler lived out his pathology in the public arena with dark charisma, enticing his people to join him in this way of dealing with threats and danger. This succeeded for those within the charmed circle. Not so good for those not within this circle. The in-group depended more and more on there being an available “out-group” to be attacked in hate-filled vehemence.

Their differences are illustrated in the one moment when Hitler and Gandhi intersected. One can hardly call it contact. Gandhi wrote:

... you are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to a savage state. Must you pay that price for an object however worthy it may appear to you to be? ... I anticipate your forgiveness, if I have erred in writing to you. (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi of India to Adolf Hitler of Germany, 23 July 1939)

Hitler’s opinion was best expressed when he commented to a British diplomat regarding Gandhi’s activities in India: “Why don’t you just shoot him?”

The default position of both men is in evidence—Hitler in the gang mentality and Gandhi perhaps here demonstrating the weak or degenerative side, “power-to”, of a love-fuelled romance. Apparently, in addressing Hitler as his friend, he failed to grasp the full savagery of the man he was addressing. Gandhi’s effectiveness within India, in part, lay in his ability to trigger the shared moral code of decency amongst some of the British leadership.

In conclusion

I describe ways in which those in leadership roles can interpret or corrupt idealistic national concepts of freedom, sacrifice, and justice. I suggest that differences of direction and implementation of vision are

grounded in the logic of their own individual psychological make-up. This leads to an intuitive allegiance to the nature of power that can be described as “power-over” or “power-to”. At one extreme, “power-over” means control infused with paranoid splitting mechanisms. At the other, “power-to” is invested with the desire to generate essential dialogue, to stir others to illuminate their own intentions, encourage and enable followers to act coherently on their highest aspirations for the good of the whole task.

I have shown how this logic of the personal intentions belonging to the inspirational leader affects the ideas behind the exercise of power. There is a continuum or fluctuation within the leadership focus of either remaining faithful to the espoused vision and mission or perfecting the most profound manipulation of public values. This dynamic is reflected in the way we, as citizens, sense that we are being manipulated through false coupling of values.

The personal intentions of the inspirational leader hugely affect the exercise of power. At best, inspirational leadership is embodied in a form of leadership communication around thoughtfulness. This contains, models, and educates the development of others, aiming to inspire them to be able to take decisions, lead, and act in the service of their highest intentions. The dark charisma of inspirational leadership is a form of perversion, which imbues abusive ideas and behaviours with the patina of popular and valued ideals—as if they belong together coherently.

Perversion of inspiration results in fragmentation and division in the group of followers. The individuals in the group may display little internal unity, operating with a bargain/exchange relationship to power and each other, and their allegiance to the leader only maintained as long as he occupies the central position. Perversion of inspirational leadership—the dark charisma of despot or bully—allows the leader to wield the group as an instrument, in ways we could describe as a large-scale two-person dynamic of basic assumption fight/flight.

“Depressive position” leadership operates a mental model of an inclusive moral system. Power is triangulated with beliefs. Commitment to others is shown through connection with them. “Power-to” generate is not, however, a soft option. It can involve an unambiguous and ruthless—a pure dedication to the task. This leadership focus requires followers to be self-authorising in the task, asking of them the same high standards and judgement as the leader does of himself.

This leadership model has an investment in developing practices of ego-less influence, self-discipline with imagination, flair and empathy in the service of realising the vision. Leadership of a depressive position ethic and strategy might also be said to illuminate how to mobilise the qualities of a large-scale sophisticated work group.

The chapter outlines how these contrasts may be understood, both through Kahane's organisational mind-set and within a psychoanalytic developmental framework. In connection with this, I have discussed some of the practices of personal apprenticeship that can allow leaders to access the formidable qualities of a depressive empathetic stance towards system change, and further, to the implementation in the present of the future desired outcome (Kahane, 2007).

Depressive or schizoid position strategies of leadership have been presented in stark contrast. Often the reality is that those in leadership may react with differing emotional "positions". Leaders, like the rest of us, fluctuate in their own personal emotional approach, in response to being supported or buffeted by the demands of the external world and their internal reactions.

The necessity of personal development for leadership

This leads to a final thought for this paper: whether personal development should be reinterpreted not as an individual but more as a political act.

Popular thinking frequently categorises dynamic psychotherapy as a means for damaged people to be brought "up to scratch", or as a choice by those privileged others to enhance their quality of life. In either case, personal development is viewed from the perspective that it affects only the individual.

The evidence from this paper leads to a somewhat inescapable conclusion that the personal development of our leaders has huge—the greatest—public impact. It emerges as the most powerful deterrent of all in minimising the dangerous link between power and corruption, and as an essential support in safeguarding leadership quality.

We are not seeing personal development in the same light as a form of instrumental, inter-active or communication skills. Nor, necessarily, as a full-scale psychoanalysis or long-term one-to-one treatment.

Dynamic self-development does, however, involve full-scale confrontation with the core of oneself. It puts a spotlight on one's coping mechanisms and the patterns of engagement to one's object-relations map in a way that is fundamentally mutative. Irrespective of methodology, such self-development must be effective in addressing the intersection between personal and leadership motivations. The intervention must "go deep" below the surface of the everyday and the conscious. It must access internal, living, innate, and unconscious values—those that are closer than skin—that drive you to be good at what you do and equally to uncover those that sabotage the sustainability and health of what you do.

Our influence as psychodynamic consultants and professionals might be well spent in encouraging key leaders to see the relevance and hard outcomes of personal development in clean and effective leadership and management dealing. The examples of Hitler and Gandhi are compelling.

Political and organisational leaders once in role, generally find it difficult to commit time and space to reflective activity.

Let me end on a challenge to us, as consultants and coaches: is it our responsibility to deliver effective, time-efficient opportunities for self-development to leaders in ways that are accessible and that relate to their real concerns?

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Power in the face of vulnerability: the Norwegian experience

Renate Grønvold Bugge

Terror attack

Oslo, a quiet summer's Friday afternoon, 22 July 2011. Suddenly, the news comes through: a bomb has exploded in the centre of Oslo, hitting and damaging a whole block of government buildings. The main target was the tall building with the offices of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Justice; in addition there were three more office buildings severely damaged. It affected 2000 offices and 3100 employees. Several blocks around downtown Oslo were affected by the explosion. At first, it sounded unbelievable, yet very soon it was confirmed, and another shocking piece of news came through about a shooting on Utøya. Utøya is a small island where 650 young people had gathered together for the annual summer camp arranged by the youth organisation of the Labour Party. The island had been donated to the Labour Party in the 1930s and has been used as a training camp ever since. The news seemed both unreal and completely shocking. Yet, by the end of the day it was confirmed: the number of young people killed on Utøya was estimated to be more than eighty, but the number of victims of the bomb explosion was not yet ascertained. In the cold light

of Saturday morning the confirmation came: sixty-nine young people had been killed on Utøya and eight in the Oslo explosion.

This terror attack was a completely extraordinary situation and it affected every part of Norway. The Labour Party was a special target and the young people had been killed to prevent them being recruited to democratic ideas and principles. In this chapter I will describe how a group of consultants and psychologists supported various groups and organisations to work through the painful processes of addressing the trauma and of mobilising groups to perform the necessary actions. I will describe both the acute and the follow-up phases of this process and will identify tasks, roles, and the approaches we used.

My reflections will be primarily offered from my own perspective as a consultant working with trauma.

What had to be done?

In the acute phase:

During the acute phase of the project I was asked to perform the following roles:

- as clinical psychologist running debriefing groups for emergency personal and community management from the location where the shooting had taken place
- as consultant/mentor/adviser to the management and leadership of the Norwegian Labour Party
- as a member of different groups within the national public health system and in the project group for planning the national ceremonies in the acute situation.

In the follow-up phase:

During the follow-up phase I was asked to perform the following roles:

- consultant to the leaders of the Norwegian Labour Party
- a member of the team of experts authorised by the Health Directorate to run weekend gatherings for the bereaved families of young people who had been killed on Utøya.

Acute phase

I shall now describe in greater detail the separate tasks we needed to fulfill and how they connected to the trauma.

Debriefing groups in Hole community

On Sunday 24 July we, the team from the Centre for Crisis Psychology located in Bergen, were asked to assist the local and regional health community service with the debriefing of the emergency personnel. We ran debriefing groups for the emergency personnel and the crisis management group of the local community who were considered most impacted and at risk. My special responsibility was to run debriefing groups for the medical emergency teams. Their responsibility had been to receive the wounded youngsters who had been rescued by volunteers who had gone out in their boats to pick them up from the water. A number of youngsters tried to save their own lives by swimming away from Utøya. Many of them were shot and wounded. The medical teams had had to select those most severely wounded to be rescued by helicopter and transported to the main emergency hospital in Oslo, and decide who could be helped by the local hospitals. The official report, issued subsequently, commended the highly professional work of these medical teams. Whilst the death rate of the severely wounded was far below the expected statistics, these teams had been exposed to severely damaged and wounded young people and had been responsible for life and death decisions. Afterwards, when reflecting upon their role, the medical team realised that they had also been considering existential and ethical dilemmas whilst tending the dead and the wounded.

The crisis management group consisted of a political leader, who was the mayor of Hole municipality, and the members of the administration of the municipality. Many of them were on summer vacations. Those who were present immediately organised themselves into a crisis management team.

Utøya is located in Hole, a small municipality outside Oslo, and although the area itself is quiet and has limited resources, there are many hospitals located close by and other available resources such as ambulance and other emergency services. The local doctors immediately took the leadership role in the crisis, together with the mayor of Hole. As several decisions had to be made during the acute phase it was important for this group to reflect together and to help each other to get a comprehensive picture of what had happened. This kind of debriefing focused on the organisational logistical aspects of crisis management and the allocation of roles to key individuals.

*Consultancy to the management of the
Norwegian Labour Party*

In the evening of 26 July, our team leader, Atle Dyregrov, from the Centre for Crisis Psychology, received a phone call from the Norwegian Psychological Association. The president had been asked for assistance by the management of the Norwegian Labour Party. I was asked to take on this challenge. From 27 July, and for the next three weeks, I was engaged full time and located at the headquarters of the Labour Party.

When I first met the party secretary, Raymond Johansen, he stated: "It is my responsibility as a leader to realise when I lack competence for the task ahead, and it is my responsibility to get the competence we need at this time of crisis. I have to make many different and difficult decisions and have to give advice in these days and weeks ahead, and it is necessary for me that it is grounded in professional advice. I need to have you as professional reference. Maybe I am loading too much responsibility on your shoulders. Do you agree to work with us on these terms?"

I think this was a very important contract and will explain why this was so. I met an organisation that was in deep crisis. The leader of this organisation was able to clarify roles and responsibilities and differences between the two of us: he was the responsible leader and I was the consultant. He was in charge of the organisation in crisis but also responsible for all decisions, with powerful ramifications for the future of a whole nation. Although our roles were clear and the tasks both known and unknown, all were tremendously challenging. Yet during the contracting phase I was confident that we could make a good team. He knew his organisation and I had experience from several other crisis situations gathered over the years of working as a consultant for traumatised organisations such as a railway company, a hotel company, and a shipping company following major accidents. I knew from these experiences that my main task as a consultant was to support the leaders in their roles as managers of the organisation in crisis and, at the same time, keep up with the challenges of planning for the future.

In this specific scenario one task which needed a lot of psychological strength was, during the first week, to make personal phone calls to the bereaved families. This task was shared between the party secretary, the political leader of the Labour faction in parliament, and the deputy political leader of the Labour Party. As soon as the names had been

released from the police investigation these three people made all the calls. But before they called it was important to sit down together and reflect upon the challenge of making such difficult phone calls. We met again just before Christmas 2011 to prepare for a follow-up call to the bereaved families. It was a balance between caring for those affected and not intruding on them. Crisis psychology makes us aware of the importance of holidays and birthdays as periods of special vulnerability for those affected.

Organisation in crisis

On the organisational level it was important for the management of the Labour Party to take care of their own personnel who had been physically and mentally affected by the bomb explosion, since the Labour Party office was situated just one block away from the government block, where the explosion had taken place. Many of those working in the party office had experienced the explosion; windows were blown out and the building shook. Some had also been to Utøya and, when they were heading back to Oslo, they had received phone calls from their friends on the island whose lives were in danger after the shooting had started. Some of them had lost very good friends in the shooting. Since many of those working in the organisation were directly affected by the traumatic event, the management asked for crisis interventions. We, as consultants, organised a network of psychologists who had the crisis intervention competence, and set up a system for booking and organising individual consultations. We also asked psychologists to run debriefings with the affected groups. We also contacted the party offices in the twenty regions of Norway to make sure that they, too, had psychological assistance available.

Since several employees were directly affected at the headquarters, many had little capacity to work. They were overwhelmed by grief and anxiety and their concentration was affected. However, the deputy secretary of the Labour Party had to focus on the ordinary tasks necessary to keeping the organisation running. This is always a challenge when crisis strikes: the acute situation takes so much energy and focus that the ordinary tasks are neglected. How is it possible to combine these two perspectives in the present situation? We decided to create a designated time-out room. When personnel got overwhelmed by their emotions they could retire to the time-out room. This arrangement gave

the signal that grief was accepted as part of everyday working life. No one had to stay at home, everyone was welcome at the headquarters. By making this designated room available to all, the work could go on, slower than usual, but nonetheless constructive. Before this was arranged, the work process often got disrupted; when one colleague cried, everyone wanted to comfort him or her and no one got any work done. The organisation was working on ordinary tasks in an unusual situation but with reduced capacity.

In September, Norway was heading for an election. The political parties agreed to postpone the start of the election campaign. The head of the election campaign in the Labour Party was asking for advice because all the material had to be changed. Specifically, how should the volunteers behave and how to answer if people started to talk about the Utøya shooting instead of political issues. Many of those who were killed had been regional and local candidates. Their pictures were in the election material and this could not, according to Norwegian law, be changed without permission from the local election committees. The time to do this was too short. We therefore decided to contact every family affected by loss, well in advance, to make them aware of the fact that the photographs of those who had been killed would still be in the public material. The membership journal of the Labour Party is updated monthly, but due to the dramatic situation it was cancelled for August. When preparing the September issue, we discussed how to combine the acute situation with the work of the future. The decision was made that the forthcoming issue had to focus on the loss and grief, with the names of all those killed on Utøya, followed by an interview with the party secretary. This interview was presented as a link between the traumatic event, targeted on the nation and on the Norwegian Labour Party specifically. The last part of the newsletter focused on organisational tasks immediately and for the future. The front page featured a photograph from the party's memorial gathering, where everyone was holding roses. This offered a link to the previous edition with a picture of voters holding their red voting cards. At first glance it looked to be the same picture. But there was a tremendous and poignant difference between these images.

When all employees of the Labour Party organisation throughout Norway met in Oslo to participate in the memorial gathering for the Norwegian Labour Party they were invited to a meeting which stressed how to take care of themselves and of all the young people linked to the party who came to the regional offices. They needed to stay together,

but how were they going to face this situation? The advice was to give the youngsters tasks to perform, for instance, to prepare the election material that was stored in the offices.

It was necessary to have this perspective when facing the problems which the young party members had to deal with. The leaders and management had lost their friends. They were survivors and had been close to being killed themselves whilst trying to protect and save their friends. How to support them was the management's preoccupation, so that they could get back into role and be able to focus on task without becoming re-traumatised. This approach proved helpful to some. Using knowledge from crisis psychology it can be predicted that concentration and memory are the two cognitive functions that suffer as a result of traumatic events. So it was important to keep in mind that the goals had to be very small, scaled down and focused on the short term. Planning on a big scale and having to focus on several tasks at the same time would not function well.

All through this period the message from me was repeated to all different levels of the organisation: keep the focus on task and role. The hypotheses were that focus on task is a coping strategy for the individuals who are affected and for the organisation as well.

On the organisational level there was a parallel challenge: how to start the first meeting, be it administrative, or of the ordinary membership? The Labour youth organisation in Oslo was heavily affected, since their leader had been shot on Utøya. The opening speech of the new leader, who was taking over from his dead friend, attempted to balance the loss, grief, and memory of a dear friend and fallen leader, with the need to take up the leadership role under such extraordinary circumstances and to be able to offer an outline of the future. The balance needed to be found between several dichotomies: between "in memory of" and recognition of an extraordinary situation; between the loss of a friend and the loss of a public figure; the focus on the ordinary agenda and on the future of the fast approaching elections.

Parallel with our work inside the Labour Party organisation, questions came up all the time that also affected the national level. Those who wanted advice ranged from different government departments, ministers, and included also the prime minister. What connected these questions was: how best to act and show leadership in the light of this being a national tragedy even though it had been targeted at the current government and the Labour Party. The leaders, as well as everybody

else, knew that the values underpinning the entire Norwegian society had been attacked, as, too, were the principles of democracy, trust, and justice.

Quite early it became obvious that a dedicated organisation for the bereaved should be created, perhaps even for all those affected. Experiences from several larger catastrophes have shown that there will be a tendency to create different associations for and of those affected because in each such tragic event there are many stakeholders, different interests, and varying needs as well as opinions. The hypothesis was that it would be important to create a national support group so soon as possible to prevent the splitting and unnecessary frustrations, and this initiative was encouraged by the management of the Labour Party. The task of establishing and supporting such an organisation was given to the Norwegian Red Cross' senior counsellor.

The island of Utøya

The island of Utøya is the property of the Labour Party Youth Division. After the shooting took place, the island became a completely chaotic environment, both physically and emotionally. First of all, and most urgently, the police had to finish their investigations before any decisions could be taken about how to manage the island. It was predicted that the immediate phase would last at least a month. In fact, the investigation was completed much sooner.

There were some burning questions, not only related to the factual realm but to the psychological one too. Of these the most urgent one was what to do with all the equipment, tents, bags, sleeping bags, music instruments, and all the private stuff from 650 people who had stayed on the island. This was one of the questions we were asked to offer advice on.

The rumour had started that the police intended to destroy everything that had been found on the island. The very first and clear advice we, the consultants, offered was therefore given to the police: Do not destroy any equipment that can be identified! It has to be taken care of! The local police did a marvelous job together with the association for civic defence. A big industrial hall was hired, a lot of drying frames were bought, and every single piece was dried and packed. What it was possible to identify was packed into the relevant bags and backpacks. All the pieces that could not be identified as belonging to a specific

individual were displayed on the floor and marked with the name of the area where they had been found. That made it possible for those who knew where people had stayed to find their belongings. A poignant question arose as to what to do with a mobile phone that was found with a bullet hole in. Again, we said "it needs to be kept and identified regardless of the pain it will cause to the bereaved to get it back."

All this work was done just in time to be ready for the weekend of the national memorial ceremony. There was a discussion about the timing of when to invite the bereaved and the survivors to come to the warehouse to pick up the belongings. Concerns were raised about the emotional impact of this and how it could be done during the memorial weekend. In the end it was decided to give information about the opening hours of the warehouse to those who wanted to come and pick up the belongings. Many used this opportunity. The police were prepared to welcome everyone. We also proposed that the belongings of those who had been killed were stored separately. The police had put the bags and suitcases on several tables covered with white table cloths and the names of the killed. There were no candles, because at that time the bereaved had been through the funerals and we did not want to make any additional links to that. Just some streams of natural light came in through the windows, no sharp electrical light.

Police officers followed those who arrived to the places where stuff might be found. Some of the police officers later told us that this particular task was very meaningful to them, mainly because they too had been overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of young people killed and by the helplessness they had experienced in the acute phase of their operation. It was also important that the police officers were in uniform. Some thought it would be better if the police were out of their uniforms for fear of re-traumatising the survivors. Our categorical advice was that the police officers should wear uniforms, because all the youngsters had to get used to see the police in everyday life. They needed to be able to meet the police and regain trust, in spite of the fact that the killer who attacked them had done so whilst wearing a fake police uniform. This was an attack on the very principles of our democracy and, as such, it was important not to eschew the uniforms linked to the system.

All efforts concentrated on making the island of Utøya ready to receive the bereaved family members and the survivors on the same weekend as the national memorial ceremony. The question we were

facing was: How to prepare the island for this visit? Just after the police had concluded their investigation on the island I went there with a representative from the Labour Party, the estates manager, and the police. We walked all over the island and went into several buildings so as to get an impression about what had happened there. We realised that the police had made a tremendous effort to tidy up the place as much as possible. They had themselves washed and scraped the blood off the floor in the café building where many young party members were shot. We decided not to cover the holes shot through the walls and doors. We agreed that it was important that it should be left realistic. The furniture in the rooms should stand in its usual place. We then visited the island again, this time with a photographer. It was necessary to document what the island looked like now in order to prepare the survivors and families for their first visit. Our professional advice was to project the pictures onto big boards, which were to be placed in the reception in the nearby hotel and at the shore where the boats left for Utøya on those days when the bereaved and survivors were invited back there. This created a mental preparedness, replacing the bloody and traumatic visual memories upon entering the boat and sailing over to the island again. All who had survived had their own traumatic and bloody memories and had experienced the fear of being the next one to be killed. By seeing the pictures of the island after it had been cleaned up, the process of restructuring could start in their own minds as the first little step towards getting a sense of continuity. We noticed when the survivors, who arrived with their families, went towards the boards they began pointing and explaining their own route of flight and what had happened to them in different locations. The families of those who were killed were more preoccupied with reaching the island as soon as possible and very few looked at the pictures at all.

One could hypothesise that they did not need to look at the pictures. They did not need to reconstruct what had happened. They wanted to get close to the place where their beloved had been killed, and hold themselves ready for the horrors of Utøya.

When planning for families to visit Utøya, we had to take into account several practical arrangements. The Directorate for Civic Preparedness was responsible for all practical arrangements, including transportation and safety. It was anticipated that approximately 1000 people may wish to come to Utøya that weekend and they needed to be accommodated and contained. A tent big enough to accommodate about 1000 people was erected. It was just as well, as on the day of the visit there was a

very severe downpour. The investigators from the police accompanied every bereaved family to the very spot where their son or daughter, brother, sister, or partner had been killed. This took quite some time but nobody was hurried away. As so many families were involved, this procedure took several hours and many families had to wait a long time. This was an especially stressful situation for the families with children.

In retrospect, priority should have been given to those families. This experience illustrates how important it is that every agency has to be part of the planning process. The criminal investigators came into the project group at a very late phase. The consequence of this was that we did not have a good enough agreement about how to handle the situation appropriate to every family's need.

There had been a serious discussion about the right timing of the national memorial ceremony: some professional advice was to wait till the nation had come back to normal after the summer holidays and then make the arrangement for the memorial after the election in the middle of September. Our advice was very strongly in favour of organising the memorial weekend as part of the mourning process, like a national funeral. Our thinking was that it would have been especially counter-productive for many families and citizens if, after a period of attempted recovery, they were to attend the national ceremony. The conclusion was finally made, at the office of the prime minister, to use the weekend of 19–21 August 2011 for the national memorial. Summer holidays in Norway end in the middle of August, so that was the most appropriate week. The Labour Party postponed the beginning of their election campaign until after this ceremony, whilst the other parties did not wish to and started campaigning on 14 August 2011.

We were pleased that it was possible to get a broad agreement across all stakeholders to achieve all these disparate tasks, such as: collecting belongings, visiting Utøya, making arrangements for the bereaved and the survivors to meet, and holding the national memorial ceremony the same weekend, exactly one month after the traumatic event.

Follow-up phase

Once the acute phase was over it became obvious that during the forthcoming year there would still be a considerable number of issues and needs to follow up. The party secretary of the Norwegian Labour Party said, quite early on: "We will need consultation that is linked to the rebuilding of the party organisation and how to deal with our values."

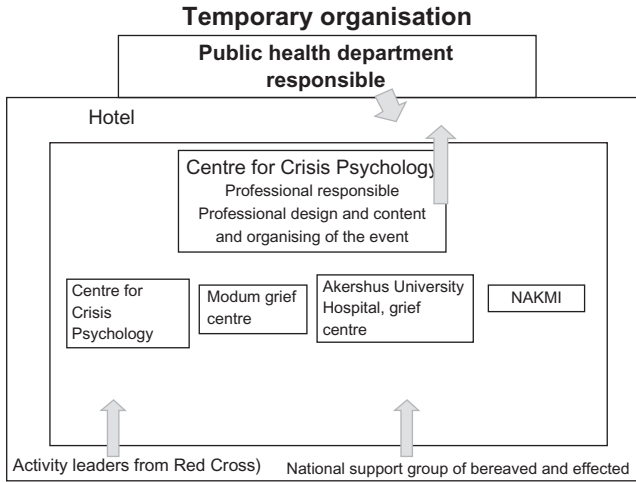
So the consultative roles we were given were not only extended but took on a different dimension.

The public health care team has taken key responsibility in following up on a number of vital issues.

Immediately after the terrorist action an advisory forum for the public health system in Norway was created. The Directorate of Health called together an expert group to run a forum to which many different organisations, both public and volunteer, were invited. The aim was to ensure that all aspects of Norwegian society could co-operate and exchange knowledge about what was happening in different areas and to explore the overall impact upon the country.

As one of the team from the Centre for Crisis Psychology, I attended these meetings. In addition, the Centre for Crisis Psychology received the mandate to take professional responsibility for arranging weekend gatherings for the bereaved family members of those who were killed on Utøya. The health directorate has had the responsibility for these arrangements. All costs, travel expenses, and accommodation have been provided from public funds. There were three gatherings during the period of the following year, spaced out in November 2011, March 2012, and June 2012, attended by 250 family members. A fourth gathering was arranged for February 2013 with about 220 family members attending. About sixty staff members from four different institutions have supported these meetings. The programme offered plenary sessions on grief reactions at different phases throughout the first year following a loss, as well as problems with relations and communication within the families. Keynote speakers were invited to present information about preparation for the trial of Breivik and the work of the investigation commission were also presented. During these gatherings the participants could join different groups arranged separately for partners, siblings, and children of those killed. Each group had a highly competent group leader, who was familiar with grief reactions after traumatic events. These gatherings of family members and staff from different institutions became a temporary organisation.

It was my responsibility to design the structure, and to work on the team building of this form of temporary organisation. Bringing together about sixty professionals from different institutions, in addition to some volunteers from the Norwegian Red Cross, has been a challenge. At the last gathering we also integrated an interpreter to the staff.



The vision of the project has been: To contribute to the healing of the wounds for those bereaved after the killing of sixty-nine young people on Utøya.

It was important for the task to be clearly defined: To create a space for reflections and sharing experiences.

The functions of the Public Health Directorate were to prepare, invite, and welcome both participants and staff. The team was also responsible for administration, registration, and information during the weekends. Other functions were: lecturers, group leaders, activity leaders, and there was a need for different roles to accomplish these functions.

The methods employed were: plenary lectures, parallel sessions, group sessions according to the relationship to the dead, for instance, parent groups, sibling groups, partner groups, children groups.

In this temporary organisation it was important to pay attention to seamless containment and also to ensure good enough communication with the hotel, the volunteers of the Red Cross, and the support group for the bereaved. Each morning in my role as a leader of the temporary organisation I attended separate meetings with the management of the hotel and the team from the health directorate. Each morning and evening we held staff debriefing meetings. Half a day before the participants arrived we started to make time for our own team building and information gathering. We held "buzz groups" for the staff members to reflect upon their expectations about their work. The intention was to help staff members to take up their roles during the weekend ahead.

In the evening we divided the staff into clusters of groups according to their functions. The team from the health directorate were reflecting on their roles and tasks. They took care of information and administration; the group leaders for parent groups sat together as well the leaders from sibling groups, and the volunteers from Red Cross exchanged their experiences from the day. The interpreter was offered consultation to the role in this extraordinary situation when sitting together with the group of bereaved family members, instead of sitting separately at a distance. All the topics were brought into the plenary meeting. This arrangement offered the possibility of exchanging experiences and reflections, similar to a peer supervision, and surfaced essential topics brought up from the participants meetings. We kept notes from the staff meetings to make sure that feedback on the school system and the health service from the groups could also be fed to the public health authorities.

In the design of this part of the programme I used the model from group relations conferences. During the proceedings I noticed and commented on some parallel processes, especially as they were linked to the issue of the final boundaries. Not infrequently there was a heavy pressure from the staff members to extend the time limits or a wish to change the given time schedule. This had to be refused, as the underlying theme that connected us all was that we, too, were facing the final time limits that death represents. By group membership putting frequent pressure on the time limits an illusion might have been created that there are no time limits as such, or that they are not final. Sometimes I also experienced difficulties in sticking to the schedule. At the evaluation it was mentioned by staff members that it was important that the temporary organisation had been ran in a structured and a predictable way. This offered a secure frame for the work that had to be done, and gave courage to the staff to face difficult questions and complex tasks. Especially in the face of enormous emotional pressure it is very important to provide structure and to regard it as a containing function.

During the weekend gathering in July 2012 it was expected that the date for the commencement of the trial would be announced. But that date was postponed until 24 August 2012. At the end of July the report from the evaluation commission was expected. That meant that two very important messages were to be given to the nation. Both of them were expected to stir up a lot of emotions and frustration. Since we were not able to work with that outcome during the weekend, the bereaved were left in a vacuum.

Our hypothesis was that when the trial opened, it would, by virtue of its predictable format, offer a particular containing function for all the raw emotions and frustrations among the bereaved, the survivors, and the entire nation.

We also saw the process of planning ahead—such as offering the schedules for the weekend gatherings for the bereaved families—as a containing system. Being aware of the importance that the containing systems offer those who are in the grip of a crisis situation, we suggested that a fourth weekend gathering should also be arranged as a place for reflection and collective grief.

We have learned that it is important to present a predictable schedule of events right from the beginning, as it offers a containing function for those most deeply affected.

There are so many levels at which people are affected when a traumatic event strikes the nation, the organisation, the regions, families, and individuals. In this case there was also an attack on the country's democratic values, on truth and justice. It was very clearly illustrated by a witness during the trial who made his testimony the day I attended the court. I got permission to attend the trial one day because of my role in working in the aftermath of the crisis. The witness was almost blind from the bomb explosion and had undergone several operations to have his face "repaired". He was a director in one of the divisions of the Ministry of Justice and was injured when the bomb exploded in a governmental precinct. He had worked for forty years, care-taking in the criminal and prison system. At the end he was asked to share some of his thoughts. He said: "I am very grateful and proud that in this situation we stick to our values and treat even the mass murder to a decent trial. I have worked for that all my life and have not changed my mind that even criminals should be treated with decency. If we are able to do that then this shows the strength of the values in our society." I was very moved by this statement in this context, and felt the impact of a belief in values and decency.

Reflections and observations

In this essay I have described how a team of crisis psychologists and consultants worked together with different layers of the establishment and the health services to offer consultancy, containment, understanding, and co-ordination of meaning to the affected groups at a time of

major and an unprecedented national trauma. I have shared my own experiences from the perspective of my role.

Many contributed in the acute phase when all was chaotic. When we came to the hotel in Hole two days after the shooting, it was still in a state of emergency, with handwritten signs on various doors, such as: silent room, staff room. At the dining hall a poster read: "Food for everyone". Some family members were still waiting for final confirmation about their missing children. By listening to the participants in the debriefing groups we shared some of the horror and despair about the situation. Later on, in my role as the consultant to the Labour Party, the focus was on the organisational perspective and administration processes to make sure that resources were made available to support those working in the organisation. When walking down the corridor of the headquarters I felt very strongly that I was in the middle of Norwegian history: there were portraits and busts of prominent past political leaders, there were pictures from important meetings held on the square outside the headquarters, and, at that moment, I realised that many of the decisions that were to be taken would have an important impact on how the nation of Norway would cope in times ahead. I felt very humble, but also grateful to be able to give something back from my own professional expertise to the nation I am so fond of.

Later on, when we prepared, designed, and held the gatherings for the bereaved it was a tremendous experience to see how motivated and willing to contribute, both in terms of time and competence, the staff members were. This created a very constructive atmosphere.

In the last part of the essay I wish to focus mostly on the organisational aspect. It was very useful to have in mind several concepts:

- Primary task according to the situation, but still within the framework of the national laws and the organisational ethic values.
- Function: What had to be taken care of and what should be given. How to design roles that had a mandate and a delegation to contribute to decisions that had to be taken in different fora and on different levels. How to ensure communication and linking of the different decisions.

From a psychoanalytical perspective it was important to keep in mind how the process of mourning is linked to trust and attachment both

on an organisational and a national level (Kramer & Tyler, 1996). The concepts of basic assumption (Bion, 1974) were very useful in understanding the dynamics during these weeks, on different levels of the organisation and the nation. Processes such as dependency, pairing, and flight-fight, were sometimes quite painful and complicated. Usually the basic assumption of pairing is interpreted as taking focus away from task. But in my experience there were many examples of a work group pairing that contributed to constructive working relationships (French & Simpson, 1997). It started with the co-operation between me and the director of the Centre for Crisis Psychology, Atle Dyregrov, when he invited me to join his team. Throughout the follow-up year there was created group pairing with the leader of the team from the health directorate, and there was an obvious constructive working relationship created between me, the consultant, and the party secretary who showed both leadership, power, and vulnerability.

This project arose when the party secretary of the Norwegian Labour Party realised his own lack of competence in the face of such an overwhelming national crisis. To recognise one's own vulnerability and not to assume that, as a leader, you have to manage everything yourself or consider asking for help as a defeat, offers an important model for leadership that is closely aligned to negative capabilities of leadership. The attitude of the leadership in this extreme crisis situation opened a lot of possibilities for reflecting together on the difficult decisions that had to be made. We were all very vulnerable, full of sadness, many had suffered personal losses. There were so many funerals to attend for the leaders of the Labour Party, so many phone calls to make, so many decisions to be made that would have consequences for so many people, for many years to come.

In the tasks that constituted the project described above I had to take on different roles: as a consultant, a clinician, an expert offering powerful advice, a specialist in individual and organisational trauma. There was not much time for "therapeutic" reflections and there was a constant push for being task-oriented. Looking back, I think that on all levels we were able to endure the existential anxiety because we were working very closely whilst feeling vulnerable and naked together. There was no prestige, no need for narcissism, no ego needs ...

The questions in our mind all the time was this:

How can we, together, find a way of showing acceptance of the situation, accept anger and frustrations but still manage to make decisions

that will reduce pain instead of adding to it? How do we give structure and containment to individuals, organisations, and the nation in their most vulnerable moment?

There was only the focus on the extraordinary situation and the deep wish to contribute to heal the wounds for individuals, families, organisations, and the nation. The focus was kept on the task.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

The US Navy SEAL culture: power, vulnerability, and challenge*

Bob Schoultz

The US Navy SEALs have received a significant amount of media and public attention in recent years. This publicity has served them well in some respects but has also created new challenges and splits within their culture. In this chapter I will briefly describe the US Navy SEALs, noting that other books and publications have offered detailed histories and descriptions that I will not attempt to repeat. Most of the chapter will focus on and explore a tension that recent events have aggravated within the SEALs culture. I will identify two opposing points to this tension: on the one hand the professional “Ethos” of the Navy SEALs, and on the other hand what I call the “Mythos” that has evolved over time, richly fed by the media, and to some degree by SEALs and former SEALs themselves. The Ethos is embodied in a brief aspirational document in the public domain entitled “Navy SEAL Ethos”, whilst the “Mythos” is present as a popular image, fueled partially by the public appeal of the rebellious military hero, an image considerably reinforced by the media.

*This is an expanded version of a plenary presentation delivered at the Annual Symposium of ISPSO in June 2012 in San Diego.

Who are the Navy SEALs?

SEALs are essentially maritime commandos. "SEAL" is an acronym that stands for SEa, Air, Land, the environments in which they train to operate. Within the military structure, SEALs are part of Naval Special Warfare Command, which functions both as the special operations component of the US Navy and the primary naval component of US Special Operations Command, a joint command headquartered in Tampa, Florida, comprised of special operations forces (commonly called "SOF") from each of the four services.

The SEAL teams emerged from the ranks of the "frogmen" of the Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) formed during World War Two to swim up onto enemy beaches, conduct near-shore reconnaissance, and destroy natural or man-made obstacles in preparation for amphibious landings in the Pacific and Europe. In 1962 the SEALs were formed as a separate unit out of the UDTs to support broader counter-insurgency efforts and conduct maritime and riverine commando missions, the objectives of which were often more strategic in nature than typical UDT operations.

SEAL teams were among the most highly decorated units during the Vietnam War. Although comprising only a small fraction of the forces deployed to Southeast Asia during the war, SEALs accounted for three Medals of Honor, eight Navy Crosses (the second highest recognition of valour in combat), and two Presidential Unit Citations (Bosiljevac, 1990). Nevertheless, the "Devils with Green Faces", as they became known among the Viet Cong insurgents, enjoyed wider recognition among their enemies than among the American public. During the 70s, 80s, and 90s and even the early 2000s, the public did not hear much about the SEALs, except for the occasional article usually focusing on their rigorous basic training. During the 1980s, *Parade Magazine*, a popular Sunday newspaper supplement, published a cover story that was typical of the occasional feature article or television special, entitled "The Navy SEALs ... Are They the Toughest Men Alive?". The American public was vaguely aware of the SEALs, but did not know much about them and what makes them unique.

"The only easy day was yesterday"

The glue that holds the Navy SEAL culture together is the extremely demanding basic and intermediate training that every SEAL must

complete in order to become a member of the Navy SEAL teams. Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training, popularly known as BUD/S training, is the thirteen-month rite of passage that not only tests a young man's mental and physical toughness, but also his ability to work with a team and his aptitude for the variety of SEAL skills that must be exercised at night, under pressure and in a wide variety of environments. It is this basic training in becoming a SEAL that is at the core of the SEAL culture, and which, by its very nature as a rite of passage, creates the tribal values that bind SEALs to each other and to their organisation.

BUD/S training has been so extensively described in books and articles, and shown on television and other media, that new trainees are hardly surprised by anything that they experience during training. The only thing that will surprise them is their own individual response to these challenges. Extremely rigorous entry-level training is not unique to the SEALs—every elite military unit has its own demanding training regimen, successful completion of which is necessary to become a member of the exclusive close-knit military unit that it feeds. But the SEAL training has probably received the most publicity because it is unique in its breadth and length, as well as the nature of the physical and mental demands that it places on those who go through it. Only approximately twenty-five per cent of those who start training will complete it, which contributes to the sense of being truly “elite” that is often portrayed in the media and certainly felt by the members of this particularly exclusive fraternity.¹

Because of the classified nature of most SEAL operations, public awareness of the SEAL community was generally limited to the largely unclassified, yet visually compelling, basic training process. Recently, however, two high-profile operations made it virtually impossible for SEAL operations to remain out of the spotlight of public attention. The first highly publicised success was the SEAL sniper operation that dispatched Somali pirates who were holding Captain Phillips, the captain of the *Maersk Alabama*. Then, on 1 May 2011, with the Phillips rescue still prominent in America's public consciousness, President Obama announced that Navy SEALs had conducted the successful raid that killed Osama bin Laden in the compound in Pakistan where he was hiding. Soon, SEALs were in the news once again after successfully rescuing, from a compound in Somalia, two humanitarian workers who had been taken hostage, followed shortly thereafter by another successful mission, on which they collaborated with the British SAS in rescuing

four British humanitarian workers who had been taken hostage in Afghanistan. Not only successes but tragedies have brought the SEALs into the public eye, most notably in August 2011, when seventeen SEALs, from the same unit that had killed Osama bin Laden, were killed when the Taliban shot down their helicopter over Afghanistan.

In February 2012, at the height of the publicity that SEALs had been receiving, Hollywood released the movie *Act of Valor* about a Navy SEAL platoon saving the civilised world from numerous terrorist plots. A unique aspect of this film is that the SEAL roles are played by active duty Navy SEALs. The Navy SEAL leadership had co-operated in the conception and making of the movie well before the recent wave of publicity, in the hope that the movie would help with recruiting to meet increasing manpower requirements. It was just a coincidence, particularly fortuitous for the movie's investors, that it was released soon after so many positive reports about successful Navy SEAL missions. Not long after, came the release of the controversial book *No Easy Day*, written by a former SEAL, describing in considerable detail the raid that killed bin Laden and then the movie *Zero Dark Thirty* which includes a re-enactment of the raid. As of this writing, several other movies dramatising recently publicised missions are in the process of being made and will be released by Hollywood within the next two years. The public is hungry for more SEAL drama, and Hollywood is ready to oblige and to profit by doing so.

As one might imagine, all this publicity has caused some perturbations in the culture of young, aggressive, testosterone-fueled men who are being led by professional officers and non-commissioned officers wishing to uphold the traditional values of the professional military ethos.

Ethos versus Mythos

In 2010 I wrote a short essay published in the Navy SEAL *Ethos Magazine* that resonated with many in the SEAL community. I contrasted the SEAL Ethos with the SEAL Mythos and pointed to the existing tension between the two (Schoultz, 2010).

First, the SEAL Ethos, expressed in a document of the same name, describes the Navy SEAL as a quiet professional with impeccable integrity, physically and mentally tough, compassionate, and a great "tactical athlete". He is proud of his heritage, his training, and his teammates,

is a gifted and talented leader, humbly ready to risk all for the benefit of his team, his service, and his country. The SEAL Ethos describes the professional military ideal, a citizen soldier, highly trained, highly focused, courageous, and ethical. The SEAL Ethos includes:

My loyalty to Country and Team is beyond reproach.
 I humbly serve as a guardian to my fellow Americans, always
 ready to defend those who are unable to defend themselves.
 I do not advertise the nature of my work, nor seek recognition
 for my actions.
 I serve with honor on and off the battlefield.
 The ability to control my emotions and my actions, regardless of
 circumstance, sets me apart from other men.
 Uncompromising integrity is my standard.
 My character and honor are steadfast.
 My word is my bond.

Source: Navy SEAL Ethos

This is an ideal, more normative and aspirational than descriptive, and serves as a template for selfless service, duty, and honour within the context of the SEAL culture. The SEAL Ethos is an adaptation of the Professional Military Ethos² to the environment and culture of the Navy SEALs.

The SEAL Ethos is in contrast with what I have called the SEAL Mythos, which does not have its own document, but which I would describe as an interpretation of stories that make up a cultural archetype. The SEAL of the SEAL Mythos is a semi-mythical figure, popularised in books, movies, television, and other media, who some of the younger (but not exclusively the younger) SEALs will try to emulate.

The SEAL Mythos portrays a rebellious military hero and speaks more of bravado than of quiet professionalism. This mythical SEAL is an amazing fighter, expert in the full range of commando skills, incredibly strong and fit, who loves the fighting, violence, and killing of war. He is a hard drinker, formidable fighter, consummate womaniser, an archetypical man's man, hard to manage in peace, but indispensable in war.

Dick Marcinko, the SEAL officer whose bold inspiration and organisational finesse created the now famous SEAL Team SIX, did as much as anyone to embody and define the SEAL Mythos. Eventually, Marcinko

was imprisoned for financial improprieties while in the Navy, and during his incarceration, wrote a self-serving and somewhat embellished autobiography entitled *Rogue Warrior* (Marcinko, 1993). He tells his life story and recounts his personal exploits in ways that have come to embody the iconoclastic, anti-establishment warrior of the SEAL Mythos. Marcinko's subsequent series of popular novels are about his fictional band of rogue SEAL warriors, who fight to defeat terrorists or other enemies of the free world, but struggle to overcome a navy and military bureaucracy which is run by inept, timid, and self-serving officers. In his novels, Marcinko's SEALs are inevitably necessary to save the day when the conventional military is too bureaucratic and hidebound to stop those who threaten freedom and American interests. We know that many of today's young men who join the Navy to become SEALs have been inspired by Marcinko's books and identify with this image.

The media and much of the public loves the character of the SEAL Mythos, as he makes for great drama and fulfils a longing that many have for a rebellious, anti-establishment hero. Indeed, to many, the Navy SEAL is the modern equivalent of the uniquely American, larger than life, independent cowboy of a bygone American West. Dick Marcinko profited very well by tailoring his autobiography and the heroes in his novels to fit the independent, self-sufficient, and rebellious hero that the public continues to believe in. The opportunity to actually become that hero is a great inducement to young men who dream of becoming SEALs.

But this rebellious and somewhat narcissistic hero is not the man that the SEAL Ethos describes as its ideal, nor does it match the young man SEAL leaders seek to develop through their rigorous training process. And therein lies the challenge.

The senior SEAL leadership extols the virtues described in the SEAL Ethos and promotes officers and enlisted men based not only on their tactical and professional competence, but also on how well they embody the virtues of the SEAL Ethos. SEAL leaders also actively and publicly seek to undermine the image of the SEAL Mythos. The SEAL described in the Ethos is an extremely competent warrior who also works well with, and succeeds in, the conventional military culture by identifying with the team whilst embodying the values of his parent organisations, the US Navy and the joint SOF community. The SEAL leadership demands that SEALs lead by example and conform to the professional

military ethos that guides all members of America's armed forces, whilst honouring the SEAL version of it as expressed in the SEAL Ethos.

In reality, however, many of the twenty to twenty-seven-year-old men who come into the SEALs believe more in the rebellious and charismatic fighter embodied by the SEAL Mythos than the humble warrior and public servant of the SEAL Ethos. They have not yet been acculturated to the military profession and its values, and have tended to resist pressures to conform to the norms of conventional society. This aversion to conformity is in fact part of what draws many to SEAL training in the first place. As aggressive young men, they are frequently more interested in seeking fame and glory and in becoming "heroes" to their peers as well as the public than in conforming to a straight-laced professional Ethos that stresses quiet professionalism and selfless service.

In order to better understand this Ethos-Mythos tension, it can be instructive to go back nearly 3000 years to one of the foundational stories of western civilisation and look at two of the main heroes in Homer's *Iliad* and examine the symbolic meaning exemplified by the ancient yet still relevant combatants: Hector and Achilles.

Hector versus Achilles

We recall that in the epic poem which helped define ancient Greece and, arguably, western civilisation, there are two archetypal warrior-heroes: Achilles, who fought for the Achaeans, and Hector who fought for the Trojans. Though the *Iliad* is largely about Achilles and his struggles, Hector is a very important player in the story and provides an alternative view of a great warrior and hero.

Today's young men who aspire to become SEALs, unknowingly aspire to become like Achilles—the world's greatest warrior—almost god-like in his demeanour and abilities as a warrior. Achilles is almost everything a confident young man would wish to be: a charismatic hero, beautiful to look at, terrible to fight against, admired and feared by all, a hero and idol to other warriors. The ideal of an Achilles-like figure would appeal to the ego and narcissism of strong young men everywhere. Within the context of ancient Greece, he was the embodiment of the independent rebel warrior of the Navy SEAL Mythos.

There are other interesting aspects of the Achilles myth that are relevant to us in this discussion. Achilles is leader of a tribe within a tribe—the Myrmidons were part of the Achaean force but were more

loyal to their own tribe than to the greater Achaean force—more loyal to Achilles than to Agamemnon. Achilles had the power and authority to pull the Myrmidons out of the fight when he objected to Agamemnon's poor decisions. Similarly, as a sub-culture within the Navy, the SEAL community had a rocky relationship with their mother service for decades, and it is safe to say that most SEALs and UDT frogmen were more loyal to their own team and team mates than to the Navy. Only in recent years has the Navy embraced the SEALs as a fully integrated—and even celebrated—part of the naval service and culture.

For Achilles and the Myrmidons, the political cause for which they are fighting is not particularly important; they are fighting out of a sense of brotherhood with the Achaeans, and because they are fighters—that is what they do. Achilles is a passionate and emotional young man—his war is personal. He fights for his own glory or that of his comrades, or in the end, to avenge the death of his best friend, Patroclus. The SEAL of the SEAL Mythos is also not overly concerned about the justice of the cause for which he fights; if his team is fighting, he will insist on being there. He trusts his government and his leaders to identify and define the enemy, and stands ready to pit himself and his capabilities against anyone in the world. The fight then becomes tribal—my tribe against those who threaten it. The war thus becomes passionate and personal.

Achilles is a very appealing hero, and it is no surprise that young men and women would be more attracted to the beautiful, rebellious, and charismatic warrior Achilles than to his more conventional and respectable counterpart, Hector.

But it is the Hector-like hero who SEAL leaders hold up as a model for young SEALs. It is Hector, not Achilles, who represents the values and virtues of the SEAL Ethos.

Hector, too, was a great warrior; the backbone of Troy's fighting force. As a fighter, he was to the Trojans what Achilles was to the Achaeans. When Achilles withdrew from the fight as an act of protest against Agamemnon, the momentum of the war swung to the Trojans. Under Hector's great leadership and fighting ability, the Achaeans were driven back to their ships, their greatest fighters were wounded, and the Achaeans were on the verge of defeat. Hector fought, and fought very well, not because he loved war, but because it was his duty to fight in order to protect his city and his family.

Hector was the pride of his city, the pride of his father Priam, and heir to the throne. He was also a devoted husband and father, who

dreamed of raising his children and living happily ever after with his wife Andromache, his son Astyanax, and future children. But first it was his duty to defend his city against the attacking Achaeans, and this he did with full devotion, even though the war was caused by the improvident actions of his brother Paris, who had eloped with Helen, the wife of King Agamemnon's brother, Menelaus.

One of the most poignant scenes in the *Iliad* is when Hector bids farewell to his wife Andromache and his son Astyanax as he departs to engage Achilles in single combat, a fight that he would not survive. She begs him not to go, not to leave their son an orphan and her a widow, for they both know that he has little chance of defeating Achilles or returning alive. Hector holds his son in his arms and tells his weeping wife:

"All this weighs on my mind too, dear woman. But I would die of shame to face the men of Troy and the Trojan women, trailing their long robes if I would shrink from battle now, a coward." (Homer, 1990)

He was not merely a great warrior; he was also a great citizen, father, husband, brother, and son. Like Achilles, Hector was also passionate and very human, but his passion and humanity were constrained and given direction by his sense of personal honour and duty to his community.

In the *Iliad*, Hector's actions are driven by duty; Achilles' actions, by passion.

Achilles is certainly the more charismatic of the two characters and that is, in part, why the *Iliad* focuses largely on Achilles and his struggles. Both Achilles and Hector are tragic figures, but between the two, Achilles is more conflicted, more gifted, has so much more unrealised potential, and therefore is arguably more "tragic" than the good man Hector, whose character is already mature and well formed. Achilles is the beautiful, charismatic, and conflicted warrior with whom young women (and men) fall in love. In the 2004 movie *Troy*, the part of Achilles is played by Brad Pitt, one of Hollywood's sexiest and most attractive leading men. Hector is played by Eric Bana, not a completely unknown actor, but certainly not in the same league as Brad Pitt in terms of appeal to popular culture.

Nearly 3000 years after the *Iliad* was being recited around camp fires or in the homes and city-states of ancient Greece, the story of Achilles continues to appeal to audiences of all ages. And especially to young

men who are full of the energy and the power of youthful exuberance, and believe themselves destined to be the popular heroes in today's culture.

And so, what is new?

The tension in values between the hero Hector and his nemesis Achilles have found their expression in many venues, and indeed such tensions have existed between the guardians of culture and the brash young lions for millennia. This is not a surprising phenomenon. However, there have been at least two recent developments that have brought this tension into sharper relief within the SEAL community:

1. All the recent press and public attention the SEALs have received, and
2. Recent adjustments to the primary SEAL mission in the Global War on Terrorism.

These developments pose a challenge to the values of the SEAL Ethos and concern the SEAL admirals, captains, and master chiefs (the senior non-commissioned officer rank) who lead the Navy SEAL community.

The problem of publicity

The SEAL admirals, captains and master chiefs are concerned over the influence that public adoration and quasi-celebrity status may exert upon active duty as well as on retired and former SEALs. Such attention can become a compelling and alluring "siren song" that is difficult to resist, especially in our celebrity-obsessed culture. But unlike Odysseus, SEAL leaders are unable to put beeswax in the ears of their men when the media starts singing their songs of praise. These leaders struggle to lead their community through the archipelago of press reports that detail (often with some hyperbole) astonishing exploits of Navy SEALs, reinforcing so many of the tenets of the SEAL Mythos. SEAL leaders, concerned about their young, and not-so-young, Achilles-wannabes being seduced by the siren song of the spotlight and celebrity status, aggressively work to debunk these myths. But the challenge is formidable. Most young SEALs were introduced to the SEAL Mythos at a young and impressionable age.

When active duty SEALs start considering the prospect of personal celebrity, they risk losing focus on those values for which they have

trained and for which the nation pays them: being ready at any time to respond, and respond well, to their nation's call to go into harm's way. The "tribal" culture of the SEAL team and SEAL platoon is inwardly focused, putting a high value on loyalty to the team and comrades, and to their mission. A drive to seek personal celebrity erodes one's willingness to sacrifice personal pleasure and ambition for the good of the group. Cultivating one's celebrity status requires a self-focused preoccupation, feeding on a high degree of narcissism. Such a personal agenda becomes detrimental to other values fundamental to the SEAL and military culture, such as team-focus, attention to mission, family, and community.

Former Navy SEALs have not been immune to the lure of the spotlight, and active duty leaders have little or no control over what they say and do. There has been a plethora of books recently published by former SEALs, sharing inside secrets and some "dirty laundry" from their time in the SEALs. Former SEALs are appearing on TV talk shows brandishing their books, offering their opinions on the Obama administration's handling of the Iraq or the Afghanistan War, or otherwise using their celebrity status as former Navy SEALs to push agendas inconsistent with the professional military ethos. Violating the spoken and unspoken dictates of the SEAL community, as well as the professional military ethos, primarily for financial gain is seen as particularly egregious, which explains the very negative response within the SEALs to the publication of the book *No Easy Day*. Such actions by former SEALs have become problematic for active duty SEAL leaders who are trying to maintain the Ethos of "quiet professionalism" within the SEAL culture. SEALs no longer on active duty are no longer part of the military chain of command, and barring egregious compromises of classified information, there is little that SEAL leaders can do.

In July 2012, Rear Admiral Sean Pybus, Commander of all the US Navy SEALs, wrote in the Naval Special Warfare Magazine *Ethos*:

This past year we've experienced "a perfect storm", of sorts, for media exposure. Reports of operational successes; the opening of *Act of Valor*, a movie made to help Navy and NSW recruiting, added to the public's interest in anything SEAL-related; along with too many of our former operators writing books and raising our public profile even higher. (Pybus, 2012)

The constant attention from the media, political leaders, and from former Navy SEALs writing about their experiences, has put today's SEALs in a difficult position with their counterparts in the other Special Operations Forces. The US Special Operations Command, which owns the Navy, Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps SOF, routinely refers to its forces as "the quiet professionals", and the special forces from the other services are understandably looking askance at all the publicity and attention the SEALs have drawn to themselves. They see this as a violation of the spoken and unspoken professional code that proscribes quiet professionals from seeking the spotlight and public adulation. Such attention-getting does not acknowledge that Navy SEALs are not the only Special Operations Forces doing the extremely demanding and dangerous combat on behalf of the nation. Yet recently, it seems, the public only reads or hears about the Navy SEALs.

Rear Admiral Pybus addressed this issue in the same letter in *Ethos* magazine:

I'm very proud of what NSW [Naval Special Warfare] has accomplished this past year, and I'm absolutely mindful that we don't do anything by ourselves—other components and agencies and partners deserve much of the credit for operational successes. I don't want the relationships with our sister SOF [Special Operations Forces] components to suffer. NSW cannot be seen to devalue humility and secrecy within the SOF community—we must maintain the trust of our fellow Joint Warriors. (Pybus, 2012)

During the build-up to Queen Elizabeth II of Britain's Diamond Jubilee, an essay by John O'Sullivan appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, noting how Queen Elizabeth has been stalwart in her resistance to the tendency she's seen in some of the younger royals to seek and enjoy the glamour and glitz associated with Hollywood-style celebrity. "Celebrity and monarchy are natural enemies," O'Sullivan wrote. "The first is about enjoying fame; the second is about performing duties" (O'Sullivan, 2012).

The same can be said about celebrity and the military profession.

The appearance that SEALs are actively seeking publicity runs counter to the SEAL Ethos ("I do not advertise the nature of my work, nor seek recognition for my actions.") As is evident from Rear Admiral Pybus's comments, he and his leadership team are concerned about that

perception, because most of the force is indeed very averse to publicity and has been conditioned to distrust the press. However, he is also sending a message to those who might be tempted by the “siren song” of public adoration, fame, and celebrity. He and his leadership team are struggling to protect and reinforce the values of the SEAL Ethos and prevent excessive publicity from undermining the professional military culture of the SEALs.

That said, the press and publicity has had its positive sides too.

For a number of years, SEALs were under intense pressure from our nation’s leaders, starting with President George W. Bush, to expand to meet increasing requirements for their skills to fight America’s enemies overseas. Since then, recruiting and retention have become very high priorities for Navy SEALs. The recent wave of public attention has resulted in a recruitment boon. Young men choose to become Navy SEALs for a variety of reasons, but recent media attention has ensured that such a decision will gain approval and admiration from three groups important to them: the greater society, their peers, and, of course, young women. Since the most recent very public successes of SEALs in their operations against terrorists, and the release of the movie *Act of Valor*, SEAL recruiters have been working overtime. Selection criteria have been tightened up and an additional selection class has been reinstated into BUD/S.

Additionally, it is satisfying to me and my former SEALs colleagues, to know that the risks and challenges of our life’s work are now better understood and appreciated by a wider public. We do indeed enjoy the public acknowledgement which we now receive and the expressed appreciation of the sacrifices and risks we undertook while serving on active duty with the SEALs.

Changing missions and its impact on morale

The United States and the Navy SEALs have been at war for ten years, and they are still at war, though the public focus on war has retreated to the back pages of our newspapers. Young men are still enlisting in the military for a variety of reasons, but nearly all know that at some point, they will be sent to war.

Many young men choose to become SEALs with visions of going to war with America’s best warriors. Nearly all of their instructors in basic SEAL training have had multiple combat tours, and a chest full of

ribbons for valour in combat; young SEAL trainees go through training hearing stories of heroism and combat. When they graduate from SEAL training, they feel entitled to the missions and opportunities to exercise their combat proficiency that their instructors and older SEAL heroes have had in the past.

In the first ten years of the post 9–11 War on Terrorism, SEALs and other Special Operations Forces were called upon largely to fight terrorists and insurgents using the “direct approach”, that is, raids that sought to find and kill or capture terrorists and their leaders. But as the war effort has evolved, increasingly the missions that SEALs are being called to perform, require a more “indirect approach”. This is a paradigm shift, as the indirect approach has a different focus, different timeline, requires more tolerance and patience and a totally different set of behaviours and attitudes. SEALs are required to develop relationships and credibility with the locals in order to create the conditions for partnering with other stakeholders and parties, not only to fight terrorists, but, crucially, to deny the enemy sanctuary and civilian support.

These new missions require more patience, less passion, more deliberation, and less drama. SEALs are deploying away from their families for extended periods in order to conduct Village Stability Operations, to build bridges with local leaders, to train Afghan, Iraqi, or African national forces to find and fight terrorists on their own, and, considerably less frequently, to do the fighting themselves. Such missions, however, fit awkwardly into the tenets of the SEAL Mythos and do not meet the expectations of many young SEALs. “This is not what I signed up for”, is a common refrain among the young Achilles-wannabes who increasingly are consigned to vital, yet un-heroic tasks. In the end, many are disappointed and disgruntled at being sent far away to undertake missions that have very little action or glamour associated with them.

Those who are guided by the SEAL Ethos might respond: “I am a professional. I do my best at what my country and its leaders need me to do. Though I train hard to be ready to be called upon to perform the most demanding and dangerous of our nation’s missions, I am flexible and agile. I will do my best to succeed wherever I am needed. It’s not about me, it’s about the mission, and about how I can best contribute to and serve our nation.”

Those for whom the SEAL Ethos may not be as compelling, and who are motivated more by the SEAL Mythos, may think or even say: “I came

into the SEALs to go into combat for my country. I've been preparing myself for years for the toughest missions, killing terrorists and other 'bad guys' in video games, working hard in the gym, steeling my mind and my body for combat. I have trained for years to be ready to go into intense combat with the best warriors in the world. Now you're taking me away from my friends, family, and culture for long periods of time, sending me to god-forsaken corners of the world, to sit and drink tea, listen and smile, while some local guy lies to me? This is a bait and switch! Get somebody else!"

Disgruntlement among the young lions is not new, but it should never be ignored. The disgruntlement of Achilles was contagious in Agamemnon's army as it is also contagious among the younger SEALs. Increasing numbers are choosing not to re-enlist, to take their talent and energy into the private sector, where the thrill of combat is replaced by the thrill of corporate conquest or making another type of "killing".

SEAL leaders naturally respond by appealing to the values and rationalism of the SEAL Ethos and seeking to reinforce the ethos of professionalism and duty. SEAL leaders are struggling to make the case for patience and duty to highly charged and often frustrated young men. Using rationality to appeal to righteous passion can be a difficult and frustrating challenge.

Wilfred Bion, a British military psychologist who worked with soldiers during World War Two, developed organisational behaviour approaches that have been influential around the world, well beyond the military fields. He claimed that people are motivated by three fundamental emotions—Love, Hate, or Knowledge (or rationality) (Bion, 1962). It is not surprising, then, that young SEALs will be motivated primarily by Love and Hate—love for their team mates and country and hate for their enemies—while their leaders are motivated by a more detached Knowledge, and the wisdom accrued from years of experience and their commitment as military professionals.

The American public, from which these young men are recruited, is largely motivated by Love and Hate as well, while the standards of the military professional ethos (of which the SEAL Ethos is a subset) are very strict and rational, very "K" or Knowledge-based, in Bion's triad. The traditional Law of Armed Conflict—upon which the Geneva Conventions are based—is very rational, and seeks to manage the passion, the "hate", in warfare, by putting rational constraints and prohibitions upon the behaviour of soldiers.

When SEAL leaders speak to young men of the wisdom and rationality of the SEAL Ethos, and why it makes sense to follow the rules of the traditional Law of Armed Conflict, and that their duty as military professionals is to fulfil whatever mission the nation's leaders assign them, it can be a tough sell. Most young men who choose to become SEALs are motivated primarily by passion—by love and hate—and when the “knowledge” message they receive from their leaders runs counter to popular public sentiment as well as to their own predictions, many resist.

Conclusion

The tension between the Ethos and the Mythos, the old and the young, between the standards of the experienced professionals and the creative passion and energy of youth can be found simmering below the surface in many professions. It is not surprising to find it in such a driven and high-performing group as today's Navy SEALs. It is, however, a unique moment in history for this group. The high profile missions that have prompted so much public adulation and media attention seem likely to become less common, as military priorities shift from direct action to keeping the peace. Young men weaned on the SEAL Mythos, who cannot learn to embrace the SEAL Ethos, will become increasingly dissatisfied, and simmering disgruntlement within the force may threaten the vitality of this strategically important force. Today's SEAL leaders are faced with having to exercise their moral authority in new and creative ways.

This is not a crisis within the SEAL community. My son is a Navy SEAL and he and his SEAL friends are rock-solid in their values; in fact I would say they are much closer to the Ethos ideal than I and most of my generation were at the same stage in our careers. But they are facing different challenges to those we had, and in a different environment. Today's SEALs have been the beneficiaries of the professional maturing of the SEAL community over the last fifty years and have grown immensely from the intensity and pressure of ten years of combat. But the super-charged environment of the last ten years has created a momentum that is hard to slow down or redirect.

The Ethos-Mythos tension, though not yet a crisis, is nonetheless an issue. Each time I speak with leaders in the SEAL teams, they share with me this culture gap with the younger SEALs, many of whom believe

that the SEAL leadership is out of touch with them and their values. There are still many who insist on believing in and living out the “rogue warrior” lifestyle that Dick Marcinko espoused, whilst the media continue to glamorise the Navy SEAL as an easy-going, hard fighting, hard-drinking, bad-ass warrior—the Achilles of this generation of Americans. Many of these young SEALs are upset at the changes to the nature of their missions and consider it almost an insult to be assigned the peace-making and peace-keeping missions which are increasingly becoming the “new normal”. They feel entitled to missions filled with action for which they have trained so hard, as opposed to tea drinking in an Afghan tent, which they feel is a mission not fit for warriors.

As a representative of the “old guard”, I am a strong advocate of the quiet professional values espoused in the SEAL Ethos. But I do have some sympathy with the values and archetype represented by the SEAL Mythos and I appreciate the self-confidence, creative energy, and ambition that they demonstrate. While the SEAL Ethos speaks of duty, discipline, professionalism, honour, and rationality, the SEAL Mythos speaks of fun and spiritedness, bending or breaking the rules, and rebelling against old paradigms.

I see this dilemma not as a choice between Achilles or Hector, nor between the SEAL Ethos or SEAL Mythos. I see instead the real potential for a “both/and” solution, accepting the strengths and advantages of each approach, while managing and mitigating the weaknesses of each, and seeking the ideal point on the spectrum between the two to achieve an integration.

In fact, I will argue that SEAL leaders will not completely disown the SEAL Mythos. I observe that they hold on to that spark of rebellious Achilles energy in themselves, even as they try to embody and represent Hector’s values. SEAL leaders recognise that many SEALs were motivated to become SEALs because of their belief in the mythology surrounding this elite group (indeed many SEAL leaders themselves were originally so motivated). They also recognise that this is often a professional maturation process—Achilles evolves into Hector, with age, experience, and with increased responsibilities. As young SEALs mature, and choose to commit to the military as a life’s work, most make a professional commitment to the Navy SEAL community. Most do embrace a more enduring and substantial vision—not of Achilles, the forever youthful, charismatic, and passionate warrior, but of Hector, the great and more civilised warrior, a great citizen, great leader, great

husband, son, and father. That said, the self-confident, fun-loving, rebellious youth doesn't (and shouldn't) completely die; in fact he still resides inside most (the best, I might add) senior SEALs, and often serves as a source of energy and inspiration.

The aspirations and ideals of young men to become heroes and cult figures will not go away—it is written in their DNA. And the demands of the larger community for a virtuous hero like Hector, who embodies their community's values, will also remain—cultures create such heroes to perpetuate themselves. But the transformation from one to the other, and the merging of these two contrasting ideals, can take place within the hearts and souls, and within the maturing processes, of individual warriors.

The Ethos and the Mythos are in an uneasy tension with each other—and could be seen as having a thesis/antithesis relationship that has symbiotic aspects to it—each needs the other to create the ideal synthesis, the third position.

The challenge for SEAL leaders is to keep them in balance, to manage the tension and do better than Agamemnon did to ensure that good judgment overrides youthful impulses and the tendency to accept at face value, mythological symbols, such as the cult of Achilles. We will do well in the twenty-first century to heed Homer's lessons from nearly 3000 years ago, that both heroes exhibited strengths and weaknesses that we can continue to learn from today.

In appreciating Achilles' power, we must also remember his hidden vulnerability as famously represented and symbolised by his own heel. We might also consider that the "gift" of public and media adoration may be a Trojan Horse with hidden dangers, not only to those Navy SEALs who accept it, but also to their warrior culture. The Achilles heel, and the Trojan Horse, have one shared meaning that is pertinent to this discussion: we should not ignore the vulnerability lurking beneath the surface of strength, military competence, and overt power. If SEAL leaders fail to deal appropriately with these challenges to get back in line with the ethos of quiet professionalism that the broader military culture demands, their entire warrior culture may be at risk.

Whether a SEAL is inspired by the Ethos or the Mythos, has Hector or Achilles as his role model, let us not forget that these are young men who have chosen to push and test themselves to their limits to prepare themselves to go into harm's way when called upon by their nation. And given the nature of the enemies we face, we need them.

I'll conclude with a quote often attributed to George Orwell: "People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf."

Notes

1. Those wanting to know more about BUD/S training, should read Dick Couch's book *The Warrior Elite* (2003), or go to www.sealswcc.com/navy-seals-videos.aspx and view the fourteen minute video "BUD/S Class 224."
2. The concept of a "Professional Military Ethos" obviously goes back millennia, but for modern America its best post WW2 expression is found in the US Department of Defense publication, "The Armed Forces Officer" published in 1950. The author is not identified, but it was commonly known that SLA Marshall was the primary writer, and he contributed a signed introduction with explanation to the 1975 edition. "The Armed Forces Officer" was most recently updated in 2007, but it is written as a more current commentary on Marshall's 1950 work.

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CHAPTER NINE

An inversion of power: an analysis of the British riots of 2011

Howard S. Schwartz and Andreas Liefoghe

The fires of a burning England were not out before its most prestigious and prominent voices began delivering their verdict on what had caused them. The rioters were poor and the government had cut their support, taking away all that they had. It had raised them to believe they needed to have certain consumer objects, but then it had not given them the means to obtain these things, so they had no way of getting them except through theft. The police were racist and treated people disrespectfully, intolerably so. Prominent figures in the government and the economy were corrupt; the rioters were no worse, and perhaps were even taking their cue from them. And so on.

But there was one thing about these judgments, expressing the views of what we will call the cultural elite, that all had in common, which was that it was society, specifically its central, defining institutions, that was at fault. The rioters, who were the powerless, were just doing what anyone would do in the circumstances they were in. It was society that created those circumstances and, therefore, it was society that was to blame for its own destruction.

In our view, there is a problem that arises from seeing things in this way. If society, through its cultural elite, accepts that it was responsible for the riots, then it effectively justifies them; it shifts the guilt from the

rioters to society itself. The forces of innocence were attacking the forces of corruption and injustice. What side should a good person be on, anyway? But if society is so unjust that rioting is people's only recourse, how can it see itself as worth maintaining? The result may be that society does not feel morally entitled to rise in its own defence.

In that case, the balance of power within society would be altered. We would have an inversion of power. Weakening society's capacity to defend itself would cause the forces seeking to destroy it to become relatively stronger, even to the extent of putting society in jeopardy. Yet the people who were rioting were poor and disorganised; characteristics that we usually associate with powerlessness. How did this inversion of power come about?

In this chapter we will attempt to answer this question by putting forward a number of interlinked hypotheses, built around an analysis of the role played by political correctness in preparing the grounds for the unfolding scenario.

Political correctness

The condemnation of society that leads to holding it responsible for the riots, hence to the inversion of power, is, itself, a product of society. It did not develop after the riots, but is a cultural configuration that has been in operation for a long time. The riots, in a sense, simply provided it with a new occasion for its expression. We call this cultural configuration political correctness.

We suggest that the connection between the riots and political correctness is quite close. In this view they are kindred; two phenomena with different appearances, but the same meaning, which they are playing out in different registers. They can reinforce each other, lending strength to one another and even making the other possible.

We will use an analysis of the dynamics of political correctness to offer a perspective on the riots. The theoretical framework of this analysis, which has been developed extensively elsewhere (Schwartz, 2003, 2010), is psychoanalytic.

The credibility of psychoanalytic theory is, of course, not universally granted. It has, however, a suitability to the study of political correctness that it may be thought to lack elsewhere. There is clearly an element of irrationality in political correctness. It is a form of censorship without a censor; we impose it on ourselves. Yet, it keeps us away from

the reasoned discussion of social issues which everybody can see are important, consequential, and desperately in need of wide-ranging analysis. It does so through an emotional power that is rarely gainsayed and which anyone can see is ultimately against everyone's interest; yet it prevails nonetheless. If that is not irrationality playing itself out in the social domain, what is?

Yet where does it get that power? This is a question that is rarely posed—it is, after all, politically incorrect to do so—but it is no less important than the totality of the issues that political correctness has obscured. And if we do not approach this question through psychoanalytic theory, what, exactly, shall we approach it through? The rational understanding of irrationality is what psychoanalysis was developed to accomplish. In fact, more than any specific theory, that is what psychoanalysis is. It is in that spirit that we will undertake this inquiry.

We will inquire both in a general way and with specific regard to an important element of the riots: namely, the hesitation of the police to impose order. This had terrible consequences, in that the rioters saw that they could get away with doing whatever they wanted, and led others to join the riots in a massive way.

All are agreed that this resulted in a powerful acceleration of the riots.

As it was put by an interviewee for the Interim Report:

Most people got caught up watching the riots. They saw the police doing nothing and just thought they could get away with it too.
(Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2011, p. 68)

It also made ordinary citizens fear for their own safety, property, and rights, thus increasing a sense of overwhelming insecurity at all levels of society. Our claim is that it was, in some significant measure, a product of political correctness.

Further on, we will look at the underlying dynamics of political correctness, but first we need to get some sense of the nature of riots.

Psychodynamics of riots

The key to the psychoanalytic understanding of riots is that, at the most basic level, there is not very much that needs to be explained. At the roots, the psychodynamics of a riot are quite straightforward. What calls for understanding is the fact that people are not rioting all the time.

This was the essence of Freud's classic book *Civilization and its Discontents*. What he presented was the view that there is a "death instinct", an innate aggressiveness that drives toward destruction in human beings, indeed in all living things.

But the necessities of civilisation require that we renounce this instinct in its pure form. Freud was famously ambivalent about this renunciation and mindful of the fragility of the institutions that it creates.

[I]t is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up on a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts. This "cultural frustration" dominates the large field of social relationships between human beings. As we already know, it is the cause of the hostility against which all civilizations have to struggle. (Freud, 1962, p. 44)

So civilisation is based on the renunciation of instincts, but it wears this "cultural frustration" uneasily. Aggressiveness is a permanent force that is always just underneath the surface and capable of breaking out any time the renunciation lapses.

Now, this renunciation of instincts, Freud says, takes two forms: suppression and repression, depending on whether the cause is external or internal. In the case of suppression, we renounce our instinctual aggression under the threat of physical punishment at the hands of authority. In the case of repression, we internalise authority, originally the parents and specifically the father, to form the superego, which turns our aggression back against us in the form of guilt.

Political correctness is an attack upon the father (Schwartz, 2003, 2010), who represents authority. As such, it undermines both of the ways in which instinctual renunciation takes place. This leaves the aggressive instinct, always just underneath the surface, to express itself without constraint. That is what we saw in the riots.

Oedipal and anti-oedipal psychology

The key to understanding political correctness is what has been called anti-oedipal psychology, and the best way to understand anti-oedipal psychology is to understand the oedipal psychology that it is defined against (Schwartz, 2003, 2010). oedipal psychology, based on Freud's

adaptation of the myth of Oedipus, is, of course, familiar to us all. For our purposes, however, it will be useful to bring some of its implications out to the fore.

In doing so, we should stipulate that we are referring to oedipal and anti-oedipal psychologies as they operate at the collective level, as cultural phenomena, establishing cultural configurations, and not primarily on the level of specific individual psychologies. It is as patterns of meaning that they concern us.

At any rate, as we know, Freud tells us that in the beginning of psychological life we do not experience ourselves as separate from mother, but as fused with her. In this state, life is perfect. Mother is the world to us and loves us entirely. Because of this fusion, mother's love for us is the way we experience ourselves, which is as the centre of a loving world. Freud refers to this as primary narcissism, and its appeal is obvious. The advent of any degree of separation has the result that we desire to return to it. Mother, then, is the unique object of our desire. We want to marry her, as Oedipus did.

The problem is that father stands in the way. He has a bond with mother that does not revolve around us; in fact it excludes us. We must get him out of our way, kill him, so we can marry and fuse with mother again. But there is a problem: father is big and we are small. It is not we who will kill him, but he who will kill us. In fact, he does not even have to kill us. He can cut off our penis, such as it is, and end the rivalry that way. The result is pure terror on our part, with the fear of castration being ever present.

What shall we do? Well, it is not inevitable that we do anything. Some people spend their lives in a condition of castration anxiety, afraid that if they follow their desires, they will be mutilated by authority. But luckily, for most of us, there is another way. We can become like father, and then we will be able to have, not mother exactly, but someone like mother. More precisely, we will be able to have a bond with mother, as father has, and which we understand in the only way we can, as the kind of close loving embrace that we remember from our own early experience.

This programme of becoming like father proceeds first through identification with and idealisation of the father, and then through the internalisation of father's way of engaging the world to form the super-ego. In this way we learn to navigate and thrive in the world that the fathers have made, gaining love as father has gained love, through the accomplishments that she values and that have led her to welcome him

into her embrace. In this fantasy, we will have returned to fusion with mother and be again the centre of a loving world. This is the fantasy that Freud called the ego ideal.

It is this pursuit of the ego ideal, of mother's love in this idealised form, unconscious though it may be, that provides us with the desire to do what we must do in the world, to fulfill the obligations that come to us as adults, and which are present to us in the super-ego, such as the necessity to make a living through work. All of these involve taking control of ourselves, which we do through our stock of aggression. That, taken all together, is what is called oedipal psychology.

But notice here that all this is based on the idea that mother and father are bonded in a way that we would like to experience. Mother, that is to say, loves father. But what if she does not love father? Then the whole enterprise would fall apart, since idealising and internalising father were based on the premise that he has a place with mother that we would like to have.

Yet why should she love father?

As we saw before, the child's love for mother is absolute, and is based on her love for the child. For the child, that love, by itself, is enough to make life perfect. This must impart to the child's image of mother, which we may call the maternal imago, a degree of goodness and omnipotence that nothing in real life can ever match, nor to which anything can even come close. Moreover, mother's love for us, because of the early fusion, is the root of our sense of being lovable, and therefore the key to how we feel about ourselves.

The result is that the infantile image of mother, which remains with us in the unconscious, is the most powerful image in the psyche.

As the infant sees her, she would be the fount of all goodness in the world. She would be omnipotent. Her love would make anyone feel perfectly loved and would be all anyone would ever need. Her very presence would make life perfect.

Set against the prodigies she could perform, what would there be about a man's accomplishments that could possibly register as being sufficient to gain standing with her? Even the best would be compromised, partial, and imperfect. Indeed, by acting in the world, creating a world as warped as he is, he has taken away the possibility of her creating a far better world just by being herself.

In these circumstances, her attitude towards father would not be one of love, but of hostility and resentment. The result would be that instead

of wanting to become like the father, the child would see that the route to mother's heart would be to join the mother in hating the father. This is the core of anti-oedipal psychology. Our point is that, driven by the power of the maternal imago, it has come to structure the approach toward the world of the British cultural elite.

Anti-oedipal psychology is oedipal psychology turned upside down. The child's view of father is the opposite of what it is in oedipal psychology. Father has not gained mother's love by his accomplishments; they cannot be worth anything. He must have gained his presence with her through the commission of fraud and violence. His accomplishments, such as they were, were part of a subterfuge.

The implication is that the separation that he caused between infant and mother was not due to a legitimate process that the child would have to accept, it was illegitimate; it was an act of theft.

Now, the child is not just seeing his own case here; in effect, this is the lens through which he sees the world. The father's theft of love from the child would be seen especially to apply to those groups, such as various minorities, that have not had love in the past. Mother's love has been stolen from them in a systematic way. That systematic theft is what the father does, and indeed what the father is. The society that he has created and runs is rotten and corrupt at its core. It is a structure of oppression and nothing but oppression. It deserves to be destroyed. Destroying it would bring about the return to mother's love. That would be a good and righteous act.

In the interim, the consequences of his acts should be registered. The father should be hated, and those who have been unloved in the past, the groups from whom he has stolen love, should be loved in compensation; indeed, they should be idealised. Their claims against the father and the society that represents his theft should be supported.

This gives us the basic dynamic of political correctness. It can easily be seen how it underlies some of the dynamics of the British riots, though not all of them by any means; we have already pointed to the instinct of destructiveness which surely was on display. But if one may speak of a meaning of the riots—and this would certainly include those attempts to justify them that we saw coming from the cultural elite—anti-oedipal psychology offers what we believe is a useful perspective. Whatever else the riots were, they were certainly an attack upon the father and his works.

Before looking further into this, there are a few points that it would be useful to make, largely concerning the nature of the father's works.

Among the most important works of the father has been to create and maintain social order. Social order has been negotiated among the fathers over millennia. Each of them was trying to attain his own vision of the ego ideal. But a common framework of objective self-understanding, in which people have been able to understand each other as objects and, therefore, in the same way, made it possible to predict each others' behaviour and made reliable cooperation possible. Following Lacan, we call the establishment of this common framework the paternal function. It enhanced the individual pursuits important to each individual. Social order, based on the paternal function, was the accomplishment that made the other accomplishments possible.

The most critical and basic element of social order is the law, which applies to everyone. But under political correctness, the law is an instrument of oppression and is to be disdained, while social order is to be destroyed.

Also important is that the father is in the boundary business. It was not the father that caused the separation of infant and child, but reality itself. The father is the personification of reality as it is first experienced. But he can choose to actively engage what he previously suffered passively. This defines his role, which is to build on this connection. Dealing with reality, and creating a boundary between harsh external reality and the family, where mother's love can then flow freely and safely, becomes his special contribution (Schwartz, 2003).

To deny the value of the father's works means denying the need for a boundary. Mother's love should become the organising principle of the world. With it, we would be able to operate safely without boundaries, limits, or constraint. There could be no such things as real enemies, only other children who have not been sufficiently loved. We would all be able to do what we want, to act on our impulses with impunity and in perfect safety.

This would have the effect of redefining the concept of the self. In oedipal psychology, the self is imagined to be separate from the world, which is for the most part indifferent to it. In anti-oedipal psychology, separation is no longer considered normal; the very idea of indifference disappears and the self is imagined to live in a world that revolves around it with love: an image that may be called "the pristine self".

Anything other than love would be experienced as a violation of the self. Most importantly for our purposes, that would apply to indifference, which would be redefined as hate.

This would be particularly so for those defined as oppressed, which is to say those who have been deprived in the past. They should be able to do what they want with a sense of enhanced entitlement, seeing it, indeed, as the manifestation of justice and morality. The rioters could see themselves in this way and the politically correct, whose idea it was in the first place, would agree.

In the next section, we will show how a number of these concepts played out in the riots, largely using material from interviews with the rioters, which can be helpful in conveying their states of mind.

Anti-oedipal psychology and the riots

As we have said, the purpose of the father's work was to bring him closer to the ego ideal; at the social level, that means gaining society's love in the form of social standing. In our society, undoubtedly, the primary symbol of the ego ideal is wealth. Wealth, then, is the symbol of attainment of the ego ideal. If the value of the father's works is denied, there is no way of justifying why some should have the symbols of the ego ideal, of social standing, while others do not. Rather, within the concept of the pristine self, one is entitled to the ego ideal just because one is who one is. In the words of one, which caught the attention of many, "We're worth it".

This idea of the riots as resulting from rage arising from a violated sense of entitlement is common in the conceptions of the rioters, and helps them explain themselves to themselves in ways that others just don't get.

Andrew, a sixteen-year-old student, says:

Police don't think we're rioting for a reason. They believe we're rioting because Mark Duggan died and we have no other reason. Like, we're rioting 'cos they're not giving us nothing to do, they're taking away EMA [educational maintenance allowance], taking away free travel, taking away certain allowances that teenagers have and they're not replacing it with anything good. (Lewis, 2011)

Similarly, if others have it, while you do not, they must have stolen it from you. Property, in the anarchist Proudhon's terms, comes to be seen

as theft. The wealth of others, that is to say, is a symbol of injustice and a suitable target of righteous destruction.

Charley, another student, was caught up in running battles with the police. He said:

There must have been at least 200 people ... It was just a horde, like a mosh pit ... Cars got destroyed. Boss cars. Like Beemer, Mercedes. I'm sitting there watching kids just rain stones on them. (ibid.)

And taking the symbols of wealth and social standing for yourself simply returns things to their proper order.

Omar, a poor sixteen-year-old from the suburbs, had taken the train into Birmingham city centre. New clothes were a special treat for him, but not just for the sake of the clothes themselves. In the torn and dirty clothing he usually wore, he felt that "people with money, good families", looked down on him:

I hate feeling like people are judging me. They don't know about me and then they just look at you and I hate it, I absolutely hate it.

But, regarding his new looted track suit:

[W]hen I get new clothes I feel better ... They will have to look down at someone else. (ibid.)

So one can easily understand that the riots, which unleashed vast amounts of destructive energy against the very structure of society, could have appeared to the rioters, not only as legitimate, but as righteous. This typically took the form of a celebration of attacks upon the law and the police, who were widely seen as illegitimate: "The police are the biggest gang out there."

Some interviews make clear the connection between the police role and suppression of the instincts, and the ease with which aggression is unleashed when that suppression stops.

This is from James, a nineteen-year-old student who originally joined the riots to fight the police, with no intention of stealing anything, but stayed to take what he could:

Someone came up with the idea: if we spread this, could the police like control it? ... I think the looting came about because it was

linked to police ... We're showing them that, yeah, we're bigger than the police, we are actually bigger than the police. Fair enough, we are breaking the law and everything, but there's more of us than there are of you. So if we want to do this, we can do this. And you won't do anything to stop us. (ibid.)

Antagonism toward the police can be seen in almost all of the interviews with the rioters. For example, Alex, a thirty-two-year-old white rioter from South London, recounts how he stepped out of a pub in Tottenham to find the early stages of the riot. An abandoned police car had been set on fire, and young people were throwing bottles at the police. He watched as they pushed another police car into a wall, where it rolled back into the street. He saw them smash the windows and place a black garbage bag on the seat. Then he joined the action:

It was the police car—I know what they stand for ... For the record: yeah, I do hate the fucking police ... I was caught up in the situation. And it was like: let's cause fucking chaos—let's cause a riot ... I went up, put my head in there—the front-seat window—set light to the black bag and walked away from there and just slowly watched it, and everybody was cheering. (ibid.)

Then he watched as the gas tank blew up. The images of the two burning police cars flashed through thousands of mobile phones, enticing a myriad of others to join the *mêlée*.

And, from another rioter:

I thought, wow, like, there's actually a force against the government, and I thought of it as like a battle, like a war, that was starting like, to put it into perspective. To put the riots into perspective, I thought of it as a war between the youth and the government, police. I think the youth and people in general and the government is opposing ... so that's why I think of it as a war. The world right now is unjust. Society, how I feel, it's unjust.

When I went outside for the first time, I could feel like, that the air was, it wasn't how it normally was, it was like an unspoken kind of feeling just floating around. It actually made me feel really strong. It made me feel really powerful. (Carter, 2011)

An important aspect of this was the rioters' justification of their behaviour by reference to the supposedly abusive behaviour of the police. This particular justification was wholeheartedly embraced by the cultural elite. The report "Reading the Riots", a joint project of the Guardian newspaper and the London School of Economics (Rusbridger and Rees, 2011), took it entirely at face value and placed this claim at the very centre of their analysis. They said that eighty-five per cent of the rioters they interviewed said that policing was an "important" or "very important" factor in the riots (p. 20).

The focal point for this tension with the police was a tactic called "stop and search", where police search persons that they pick up on the streets whom they have reason to believe have committed a crime. Most of the rioters had been subjected to this tactic, which had been disproportionately applied to black people, in terms of their fraction of the population, and blamed the riots on the aggressive and discourteous manner with which it was employed.

Of course, it is possible that the British police, supposedly marinated in racism, had been so abusive in their treatment of black people, that a revolt, in the form of the riots, was understandable. But our analysis, as it points to the inherent antagonism in anti-oedipal psychology, between the pristine self and objective social order, suggests another possibility.

According to the official Interim Report (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2011) those arrested for rioting had committed, on average, eleven previous offences and of those who had committed prior offences, the average number was fourteen. Eighty-eight per cent of those arrested had been previously "known to the police" as a result of having been previously arrested, convicted, or cautioned (p. 29).

As senior officials were reported in the Final Report (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012) to have said: "[A]s 9 out of 10 arrested rioters were known to the police, it is not surprising that they cited poor relationships as a motivational factor" (p. 24).

With specific regard to the tactic of stop and search, pulling someone off the street and searching them is by nature aggressive and discourteous. Being treated on the premise that one may be a criminal is a violation of one's dignity and is going to be felt that way by anyone who does not credit the reasonableness of the police action. But the capacity for seeing the reasonableness of police action arises from seeing one's

behaviour from the standpoint of society's common framework of objective self-understanding. Yet that comes from the internalisation of the father, which is, according to the present theory, exactly what was being rejected here.

Rather, the evident feeling of grievance suggests a level of entitlement characteristic of the pristine self. Such a person would see police as being abusive even when they were doing their job in an entirely proper fashion.

The chapter up until now offers an explanation for the outset of the riots. The continuation of the riots needs further explanation, since the agencies of social control could have contained this aggression directed against society by doing their traditional work of countering that aggression by harsh punishment. Yet this did not happen. We need to ask why not.

What happened to the forces of social order?

There is agreement amongst observers and the public that the police hesitated to impose order and that this hesitation was widely noted and served as an accelerant to the riots, transforming them from local occurrences to a large scale frenzy.

In effect, this absence of police had a profound impact, not only on the course of the riots as such but also on a sense of public disbelief and growing social anxiety that law and order were not being maintained as expected.

To understand this hesitation, we need to see what impact anti-oedipal psychology and political correctness had upon the police, who were, after all, the agents of the now rejected superego.

The view we will offer here is that the police were required, even within the context of their normal functioning, to turn their aggression against themselves and see themselves as an oppressive force. The rioters, in other words, were justified in directing their aggression outward. The police were required to turn their aggression inward; they were the ones who were supposed to feel guilty.

We can think of the result as the castration of the British police.

In order to understand how this came about, we need to engage with the issue of race, and with the history of the police's relationship to that issue.

*The castration of the British police through
political correctness*

At the outset, the rioters were overwhelmingly black. Later on, they became quite multi-ethnic, but if one is looking to understand the initial hesitancy, the orientation of the police towards the black community suggests itself as a good place to start our analysis.

Within the framework of political correctness, black people have been designated as the paradigmatic oppressed group, from whom love has been stolen by the father. Now, within the logic of political correctness, objective social structures are not recognised as objective, but are seen as agencies of oppression. Our point is that, for many black people, objective social structures have come to be seen as agencies for the specific oppression of black people, which is to say racist.

The dictates of political correctness require that, in pursuance of the demand for love of the oppressed, this interpretation be validated. The effect has been to categorise police practice as racist, even if the police are doing exactly what they are supposed to do in order to maintain law and order.

To show how this developed in Britain, a look at history is necessary. Specifically, one must consider the aftermath of the murder on the night of 22 April 1993 of a young black man named Stephen Lawrence. Lawrence, a person whose blamelessness in this incident has never been seriously questioned was, along with a friend, waiting for a bus in a predominately white area of South London. He was set upon by a group of five or six young white thugs. One of the thugs shouted "What, what! Nigger!" and stabbed Lawrence who died of his wounds.

The police investigation of the murder, which involved up to twenty-five police officers, was soon focused, based on information from people in the neighborhood, on a group known as the Acourt gang. We now know, on the basis of DNA analysis, that these were, indeed, the attackers. However, at that time, although several members of the gang were arrested, the evidence was ruled by the Crown Prosecution Service to be inadequate to sustain a conviction, and they had to be released.

But by this time the incident had become an international cause célèbre, and this dénouement was unacceptable. So the investigation continued and was reinvigorated. It was lavishly resourced, and

included the placement of videotape equipment in the apartment of one of the members of the gang, where they frequently gathered. Still, the authorities did not acquire information which they believed would be sufficient evidence for a conviction.

The Lawrence family, however, could not accept this judgment and began a private prosecution of some of the gang members, which commenced on 17 April 1996. In that trial, which received full police cooperation, the gang members were acquitted, due to the unreliability of the evidence.

From a legal standpoint, that should have been the end of the matter. England had an established principle of "double jeopardy", which prevented suspects from being tried again, once acquitted, even in a private prosecution.

For our understanding of the effects of this incident on the psychodynamics of the police, however, things have not yet begun. That beginning arrived when the Lawrence family claimed that the reason the gang were not convicted was that the police, and society as a whole, were racist.

The final culmination of this racism was the trial itself which, according to Mrs. Lawrence, had been a sham:

In my opinion, what happened in the Crown Court last year was staged. It was decided long before we entered the Courtroom what would happen—that the judge would not allow the evidence to be presented to the jury.

In my opinion what happened was the way of the judicial system making a clear statement, saying to the black community that their lives are worth nothing and that the justice system will support anyone, any white person who wishes to commit a crime or even murder, against a black person. (Macpherson, 42.13)

The family brought the matter to the Police Complaints Commission, which authorised an investigation by the Kent Constabulary that produced a 400-page report which found that, whilst there were areas of the investigations that were of varying quality, there was not "any evidence to support allegations of racist conduct by police officers".

But things were not to remain at that stage. Rather, with the advent of the Labour government, a new inquiry was inaugurated under a panel headed by a retired High Court judge named Sir William Macpherson,

which was intended to make recommendations concerning how the police should handle racially motivated crimes.

In the end, Macpherson produced a report running to 335 pages of text which, like the Kent Constabulary, found no evidence of overt racism or discriminatory behaviour, either at the organisational level, regarding official policies, rules, or permitted practices that encouraged or condoned racism, or at the level of the conduct of individual police officers. Macpherson said: "We have not heard evidence of overt racism or discrimination, unless it can be said that the use of inappropriate expressions such as 'coloured' or 'negro' fall into this category".

But they found the Police Service guilty of racism nonetheless. They did this by claiming that the Police Service was afflicted with "institutional racism", a term they derived from the American black power activists Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton (1967). Moreover, through a breathtaking feat of generalisation, they found it applied to the rest of British society as well.

We offer the view that it was this conclusion, which was widely cheered throughout the country, that was responsible for the subsequent trajectory of the British police. In analysing the thought of the Macpherson group, we have been guided by a superb book by Norman Dennis, George Erdos, and Ahmed Al-Shahi (2000) that rigorously and comprehensively dissects the Macpherson inquiry, with regard to its process and product.

This is Macpherson's definition of "institutional racism":

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (Macpherson, 6.34)

The key term in the definition is "because of." Notice that there is nothing in the making of this attribution that needs to be based on evidence, or be directly identifiable by observation. To find racism, they are going to have to read the organisation's unconscious mind, as it were. But how can such a reading be done in a way that would establish their claim as firmly grounded?

Remarkably, in an issue of such importance, they did not try to ground it. They based the claim on “inference”, which, in effect, meant they thought it was true (6.40). Essentially, they made the claim as dictum and defended it by casting aspersions on anyone who disagreed with it as being themselves racist (e.g., 6.47).

The critical element here was their definition of racism, which was entirely subjective and without concrete reference. They employed various formulations, one being a definition by the Association of Chief Police Officers: “any incident which included an allegation of racial motivation made by any person”. Another, equivalently, was “any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person”.

Thus, under this definition, something is racist if someone says it is racist, and especially if it is perceived to be so by the victim, who may, of course, only be defined as a victim by this imputation of racism itself. In this way, it becomes a tautology, a statement that is true by virtue of its terms alone. In Kant’s terms, its truth is *a priori*.

But this definition deprives the designation of racism of any objective content. Anyone can accuse anyone else of racism and that accusation itself would be all the proof necessary. The problem is that nothing of any significance will have been proved.

That, of course, does not mean that Mrs. Lawrence’s claim is false. It simply means that the Commission’s acceptance of the claim is of no significance. And it means that if the claim were to be validated, it would have to be independently validated on the basis of evidence. But we have seen that no such evidence had been adduced, even within the testimony of the Lawrences. Add in the possibility that what was behind the charge was projection, and we see that there is, in the Lawrence accusation, nothing of substance.

And yet, there can be no doubt that Mrs. Lawrence thought she was saying something of significance, and that the panel agreed with her. What can be the basis of their belief on this point?

The answer is political correctness. This is the point at which the dynamics of anti-oedipal psychology—and here we should recall that we are concerned about the operation of this psychology at the cultural level, as establishing a pattern of meaning—come fully into play.

As we have seen, for anti-oedipal psychology, the objective world has been defined away. The idea of it was a subterfuge promoted by the father. Within the domain of the mother, the world would revolve around us with love. Fusion with her would mean the attainment of

the ego ideal. We would be idealised, which is to say we would be the centre of a loving world. The normal self would be the pristine self.

Any response other than love and idealisation would be experienced as a violation of the self, an assault upon the self. This would take specific form for those defined as oppressed, for instance those defined as having been oppressed because of their colour. They would experience lack of idealisation as structured assault against the self on account of race; in other words, as racism.

Notice the implication here. This makes the accusation of racism, as it was used in this case, dependent on the proposition that, in the absence of racism, the world would revolve around one with love.

But that is just not true. The world would no more revolve with love around the accuser than it revolves in that way around anyone else. The indifference of the world is just a fact. The world is not the accuser's mother any more than it is the mother of anyone else. And this is so entirely independent of race.

Now, let us be clear what we are talking about. We are not denying that racism exists; we are simply questioning the validity of the charge of racism in cases like this: where the charge is treated as a tautology, true by virtue of having been made, and where there is no objective evidence upon which it could be empirically based. How often the charge of racism issues within such a constellation, and how much it is a valid response to a real situation, is not for us to say. But it does not matter in the present analysis, because the specific case that concerns us is significant in its own right.

However small the category to which it belongs, it was the instance that led to the designation of the British police as institutionally racist, and to the consequences that followed from that. We are suggesting that these included the castration of the British police, and the consequences of that, including their fatal hesitancy in defending England against the riots of the summer of 2011.

The corollary of all this is that the charge of racism in this instance, which appears to refer to something in the other, a pattern of behaviour, perhaps, or a state of mind, is something quite different. On the argument we have put forward, it is not about something in the other, but about something that is *not* in the other. It represents an invocation of the basis of one's claim to having one's feelings of being abused by the indifference of the other validated.

The other half of the equation is that the authorities, in this case Sir William Macpherson, 27th hereditary chief of the Clan Macpherson, commanding officer of the 21st Special Air Squadron Regiment of the Territorial Army, honorary fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and latter day acolyte of Stokely Carmichael, operating in the maternal role within the dynamic of political correctness, provided exactly that validation.

The Macpherson use of the term "racism"

The Macpherson group's report mentions five areas of evidence for the demonstration of racism: (a) the treatment of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence at the hospital on the night of the murder; (b) the initial reaction to the victim and witness Duwayne Brooks; (c) the family liaison; (d) the failure of many officers to recognise Stephen's murder as a racially motivated crime; and (e) the lack of urgency and motivation in some areas of the investigation. (Dennis, Erdos, and Al-Shahi p. 36)

In evaluating these, it is important to recall again that none of the exhaustive investigations of the police found any concrete evidence of racism at all. The charges of racism, then, came down to nothing but feelings, and perhaps projections. Whatever they were, in the instances that are central to this case, they were made by the Lawrence family and Duwayne Brooks, and then ratified by Macpherson's group.

But the testimony of Mr. Brooks was inconsistent, unreliable, and unusable (Upton, 1999); the trial judge said that Brooks did not know "whether he is on his head or his heels". And the stated view of Mrs. Lawrence was clearly over the top. It does not deny the sincerity of her emotions at the time to say that the proposition that British society would support the killing of any black person by any white person was contradicted by the zeal with which that very society had turned itself upside down in trying to bring the killers to justice, and indeed which elevated her statement to its importance. Whatever the motivations behind the extravagance of her assertion, whether they were political, psychological, or simply a penchant for hyperbole, they were certainly outside the limits of the sort of accuracy that dispositive evidence requires.

The question becomes, in the absence of supportive evidence, what was the basis upon which Macpherson found racism? That question turns on what "racism" meant to his group. The crucial point about

this is that, in agreement with our theory, in every case where racism was supposedly seen—as opposed to point (d), in which the evidence of racism was that it was not seen—racism referred to nothing other than treating the Lawrences and Brooks with indifference. This point is conclusively demonstrated by Dennis, Erdman, and Al-Shahi. Considerations of space preclude the enumeration of all these instances; one must serve as a good enough illustration.

In this example, a police officer named Little was reported to have said to Mr. Lawrence at the hospital to which Stephen had been brought: “We’ve got a young lad in there, he is dead, we don’t know who he is, but we would like to clarify that point. If it is not your son then all well and good, but we do need to know. I am sure you would like to know as well” (Macpherson, 12.44).

The Macpherson group observed, to begin with, that Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence required careful and sympathetic handling, and that Mr. Little’s approach was insensitive and unsympathetic, which is true, but then they said this:

Although he had worked in multi-cultural societies and areas throughout his service and believed that he treated everybody in the same way his lack of sensitivity and his inaction, particularly at the hospital, betrayed conduct which demonstrates inability to deal properly with bereaved people, and particularly those bereaved as a result of a terrible racist attack. He failed to deal with the family appropriately and professionally. This was unwitting racism at work. (Macpherson, 12.62)

The point is that there could have been any number of reasons for Officer Little’s insensitivity. Maybe he was just an insensitive guy who would have treated anybody that way. Yet that possibility was not considered. Evidently, it was not thought to matter. The question is why such an obviously relevant issue was not taken into consideration. The reason, we suggest, is that it was actually not relevant to the way they were using the term “racism”.

Our view is that, within anti-oedipal psychology, race established a claim to maternal embrace, to being treated as the pristine self. Anything short of that would be experienced as a violation of the self on account of race, and hence as racism. Macpherson provided no substance to this vacuity, but simply carried it forward and gave it official blessing.

Institutional racism

From this point of view, we can see that the charge of institutional racism made a certain kind of perverse sense. Doing what the police had traditionally done would, within this framework, be seen as racist.

What did the police traditionally do?

Since the nineteenth century, the British policing tradition, which has been the basis of professional policing throughout the West, has been defined by nine rules (see, for example, CIVITAS, no specific date). These rules, which give strong emphasis to the necessity of maintaining “public favour”, are of particular interest to us here because they specify the paternal way public support is to be sought. Rule Five is particularly relevant.

5. To seek and preserve public favour, not by pandering to public opinion; but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws, by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing, by ready exercise of courtesy and friendly good humour; and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.

In other words, the police have not been in the business of making specific groups feel loved, but of enforcing the law under the assumption that the laws are what they are, and applying them in the same way to everyone. The police, that is to say, operated within the framework of objective meaning provided by the paternal function. This is what was lost as the legacy of the Macpherson Inquiry.

From that point onwards, the police could not know what they were supposed to do, because the meaning of the laws would be determined by how they were interpreted by segments of public opinion. The injunction placed upon the police was not to ignore public opinion, but to be sensitive and even subordinate to it. And the principle which directed their sensitivity was based on the premise that, left to themselves, they would be seen as racist, which is now implied by enforcing the laws equally. Henceforth, relying on the laws as given would make the police vulnerable to a charge of racism, and therefore a finding of guilt. By accepting this, the police undertook to turn their aggression

inward against their own enforcement of the laws, instead of expressing their aggression outwards in the process of law enforcement.

It was almost inevitable that this would lead to the fatal hesitancy displayed by the police at the outset of the 2011 riots.

Conclusion

The idea that the paternal function, and indeed the father, can be done without rests on a guarantee, made in the name of the omnipotent mother, that she will take care of us in the absence of objective social order. But there is no such mother and therefore she cannot make good on that guarantee. The destruction of social order finds us not as centres of a loving world, but in utter chaos.

In a way, the idea that the father can be done without is a measure of the father's accomplishments. As we have said, the father represents indifferent reality, and his role encompasses the task of creating and maintaining a boundary between the world of the family, where the love of mother can operate safely, and the outside world of harsh, indifferent, reality.

But through the development of science, technology, and disciplined imagination, all based upon the paternal function, the boundary with reality has been pushed so far away that the very existence of reality has, within the highest circles of the intellect, been called into question. Room has thus been created for a reorganisation of society, in the name of the omnipotent mother, that turns desire into demand and undertakes the realisation of a utopian fantasy as a programme of concrete political action. It subordinates reality to fantasy and invalidates the constraints that reality would otherwise impose.

But reality will not be mocked. The repressed will return, as it did during the riots of August 2011.

Endnote

We need to be clear about what we are saying and what we are not. We are not saying that any social criticism poses a threat to society. On the contrary, a healthy society is not only not endangered by criticism, it positively needs criticism to stay healthy. The matter here is one of balance; it is the unanimity of negative opinion here that indicates the problem. When Joseph Schumpeter spoke of "creative destruction", he did not mean that destruction, by itself, is creative. He meant that

alongside the destructive processes were constructive ones, that could thrive in the space created by the destruction. But creativity flourishes amidst positive feelings about the self, not self-hatred.

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CHAPTER TEN

Poland: a case of powerful recovery from vulnerability

Sylvia Cichowska and Rafał Cichowski

Poland—a country situated between eastern and western Europe. Polish people are a nation torn between eastern emotionalism, impulsivity, and western rationalism, cautiousness—a buffer between eastern and western Europe. It is a country whose identity is constantly changing; formerly multicultural (including Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, Tatars, Lithuanians, and Armenians) it is nowadays monocultural. Poland is a Catholic state situated between the eastern Orthodox Church and western Protestantism. Geographically located in the centre of Europe, for centuries it had to defend its borders, a country that still remembers its past power that used to reach from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. The same country that was later geographically annihilated, absorbed, balancing between existence and nonexistence. “A seasonal state (saisonstaat)” —as Germans ironically called it after the World War One.

The theme of constantly redefining its self-image and re-establishing its borders seems to be a leitmotiv of Polish history. Settling the Polish borders after World War One, and the fact that the borders were approved by Germany in 1989, constitutes a very important factor in the current image of Poles and Poland. Modern Poland and Polish people are like a newly discovered Self that derives energy from its clear

definition and from memories of its difficult past that remind Poles how bad things can get. Can Poland and Poles be compared to a patient who has won a fight for his own identity within his own borders? A patient who has recovered from borderline syndrome that has lasted for centuries? In the following, we would like to discuss whether and to what extent the metaphor of a borderline personality—with its weak self, a tendency to split objects into good, idealised, and bad, devalued—is an adequate illustration of the historical process of building the identity of Poland and of its people.

A borderline state

To take a look at Poland, its history, and modern times through a psychodynamic lens, first we need to clearly define the borderline syndrome itself and its characteristics.

Chronologically speaking, Adolph Stern, an American psychoanalyst, was the first to describe the set of symptoms typical of borderline disorder (Stern, 1938). He labelled disorders that could not be classified as neuroses or psychoses as a “borderline group of neuroses”. Subsequently, other theoreticians also defined borderline as a disorder situated between neurosis and psychosis (Kernberg, 1975; Knight, 1954; Schmideberg, 1947).

Impairments characterising patients with borderline personality disorder can be divided into three main categories (Sokolik, 2006) that refer to: 1) creating specific object relations (lack of boundaries between Self and object, projective identification—I am you and You are me); 2) using specific defence mechanisms (object-splitting e.g., into “good” and “bad”, “passive” and “active”, projective identification, projection, introjection, idealisation, and, associated with it, devaluation); and 3) displaying weak ego characteristics (sense of incoherency, feeling of emptiness, incapacity to control drives, emotions, and impulses, inability to sublimate drives and express them in a mature way). According to DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) by the American Psychiatric Association (1994), key symptoms of borderline disorder include: identity disturbance—unstable self-image or sense of self; chronic feelings of emptiness; frantic efforts to avoid abandonment; a pattern of unstable interpersonal relationships characterised by alternation between idealisation and devaluation of others; impulsivity and affective instability. Bearing in mind the above

definitions of borderline disorder, we would like to use it as a metaphor to illustrate Polish history, its falls, entanglements, and triumphs.

Identity

Poland has been a melting pot of different nations, cultures, and religious beliefs for centuries. High diversity but also incoherency and fragmentation—these are the features that best describe Polish identity. Until World War Two, the Republic of Poland was a multi-cultural and multinational country. Moreover, at the end of the eighteenth century, before the partitions and loss of independence, Poland was also a tolerant country, not trying to push for strong assimilation of people of different cultures and religious beliefs. Jews expelled from western Europe (Germany, England, France) could settle freely in the First Polish Republic (I Rzeczpospolita), which lasted from the Middle Ages until partitions conducted by Russia, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the eighteenth century. Because of the liberal policies instituted by the rulers in Poland, the country was at that time described as heaven for nobility, purgatory for townsmen, hell for peasants, and Eden for Jews (Tokarska-Bakir, 2004). This situation changed significantly during the partitions. Processes of Germanisation and Russification of Polish people, as well as other nationals living in Poland in effect limited previously held liberal privileges.

However, in the interwar period, after regaining independence in 1918, Poland was still an ethnically and religiously varied country. According to the census conducted in 1921, sixty-one per cent of citizens declared themselves to be Roman—Catholic, twelve per cent Greek Catholic, eleven per cent Russian Orthodox, eleven per cent of Mosaic confession, and two point six per cent Protestant. Żarnowski (1973) determined that, in 1930s, Poland was inhabited by the following language groups: sixty-six per cent Poles, fifteen point three per cent Ukrainians, eight point six per cent Jews, four point three per cent Belarusians, two point six per cent Germans, and two point two per cent describing themselves as others or “local”—though it is worth mentioning that before World War Two national identity awareness was mostly an elite privilege. Many peasants described themselves as “local”, mainly due to lack of, or poor, education. Poland was also strongly socially stratified before World War Two.

Difficult and often tragic events—such as the loss of Eastern lands in 1945, with all the minorities living there (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians), as a result of the Yalta Conference; the genocide of Jews by the Nazis during World War Two; the mass murder of Polish elites by both Nazis and Soviets—led to a broadly defined ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic unification of the Polish people. Also, in the post-war Communist period further waves of unification took place in Poland. Social diversification was reduced, destroying elites, both financial ones, through nationalisation, and intellectual ones, by promoting people mainly of peasant and working-class origin over and above those better educated from the so called “intelligensia”. Moreover, at the end of 1960s, many Jews who had survived the Holocaust, were forced to leave Poland. These events were connected with the “purge” of the party, putting the blame for the Stalinist abuses on the communists of Jewish descent. In addition, anti-Semitic propaganda was used by the then authorities in their own power struggles. This was also happening against a background of support given by the Eastern Bloc to the Arabic countries during the war with Israel in 1967.

Who are Poles and what is Poland nowadays? In 2011, according to the national census, ninety-four per cent of respondents identified themselves as Polish. Research conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) in November 2011, showed that ninety-five per cent of Polish citizens declared themselves to be Roman-Catholic. However, Poland is a country whose citizens literally carry within themselves the history of former diversities. Poles are a rich and heterogeneous mixture with predominant Slavic features. Unified in their diversity, this is the picture of the modern citizens of the country by the Vistula river. Perhaps such national and religious homogeneity and—connected with it—stability, could lead to the creation of a germ of consistent self, a foundation for developing Polish identity. Defining “who I am” and reducing the anxiety of indetermination allows one to decide about oneself in a definitely more mature way, less chaotically and impulsively, accepting difference and the diversification of others and perceiving them as important assets. Will the present coherence prove to be just a façade? Will we be able to build a stable future on such a basis? It is rather difficult to answer this question clearly at the present time; however, let us continue further with the exploration of this metaphor.

Dependency

In the last 250 years, Poland has experienced two long periods of loss of independence. First, at the end of the eighteenth century Poland lost its sovereignty for 123 years, which was recovered only at the end of the World War One. Subsequently, after a short period of independence immediately after the World War Two Poland became absorbed again, this time by the Eastern Bloc. Poland became completely dominated by and dependent on the Soviet Union for almost fifty years. Undoubtedly, Poland is a country with a difficult geopolitical location—on the border of East and West, between two world powers, Russia and Germany.¹

Having a weak self, typical of a borderline personality, introjections of other people—especially significant objects, for example, mother or father—are the way to define oneself through “borrowing” or “inviting into oneself” another person’s identity. Not only does the weak self crave support from others but it also invites being absorbed by the one who is stronger, more expansive. Polish history is a story in which the theme of dependency and the fight for sovereignty can be considered as a leitmotiv. Polish dependency, mostly on its powerful neighbours, has a long history.

Three phenomena that have strongly influenced modern times are, most significantly: three partitions of Poland by Prussia, Russia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1772–1795) as a result of which Poland vanished from the map of Europe; Polish dependence on the Soviet Union after World War Two (Poland as a satellite state); and joining the EU in 2001, which should be also classified as a dependence tendency.

Partitions have been some of the most painful events in Polish history. Neighbouring powers took advantage of the country’s military weakness and its split elites. In 1764, Russia and Prussia signed a secret agreement concerning a military act against Poland. Subsequently, in 1772, Russia, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire dismembered Polish lands. In 1793 Russia and Prussia conducted a second partition and, finally, in 1795 three neighbouring superpowers divided the rest of the Polish lands between themselves. Poland disappeared completely from the map of the world for 123 years! Eighty-two per cent of the territory of the First Republic of Poland became Russia, eleven per cent Austro-Hungarian Empire, and seven per cent Prussia. It is worth mentioning that the only country that never officially recognised the partitions of Poland, was Turkey. The consequences of the partitions are

still visible to this day. Detailed research on voting tendencies among Poles showed that differences in election preferences mirror, practically to the borough, the former partition borders. Differences can be seen in people's mentality too: western mentality—former Prussian partition—tends to be rational, pragmatic, but also more opportunistic, with a vision of an open-minded state, putting an emphasis on obeying the law and social rules. Eastern mentality, on the other hand—former Russian and Austrian partitions—still has a visible trace of romantic idealism and is devoted to a vision of the nation state and traditional values. This split within the nation certainly does not help move the country in one direction. It is also reflected in those contemporary political representatives being elected to parliament who try to build Poland's position in strong reference either to greater and broader structures (e.g., the EU) or in opposition to them. Both tendencies are symptoms of dependency, because the point of reference is, in both, cases external—self is a part of an entity or self is what is not inside of me. We need to know who we are and what our needs and interests are in order to build our own strength.

One can find such examples of dependency on greater, absorbing structures (at first often idealised and afterwards completely devaluated) in modern Polish history, which have to be mentioned here. The weakness of Poland, exhausted by World War Two, was again exploited. Under the agreement of the winning superpowers Polish territory was reduced—one part of its land was annexed by the Soviet Union and the other became dependent on it. Polish territory was also physically shifted to the West and Poland lost important social and cultural centres such as Vilnius and Lviv. However, its new territory now included significant German cities such as Wrocław (Breslau). New Polish borders were established and kept in secret by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin—first in 1943, in Teheran and finally in 1945, in Yalta. Poland and its authorities did not have any influence on the decisions made by its allies. The country was used as a pawn, taken in a great chess game.

Domination of Poland by the Soviet Union lasted nearly fifty years; this was a period of building Polish identity based on another dependency system. This system gained a degree of consistency, and some followers, through eliminating the pre-war elites, using forced emigration, social exclusion of the aristocracy, and atrocious executions of the home army soldiers and the army commanders, as well as of political leaders. This was achieved by the Polish Secret State on the orders of Big Brother.

Thus, created and reinforced, new and communist Poland built its own elites, often made up of working-class and peasant elements. Efforts too place to eradicate social difference, to devalue aristocracy, to nationalise private property, and centralise industry as well as management. These were the very building blocks of a totalitarian state; created in the name of liberation from oppression, it had, in the name of that very liberation, a deep enslaving and imprisoning effect upon the nation. Poland became a state with a perverse personality, where nothing is as it appears to be.

The period of communism in Poland can be divided into several stages marked by successive secretaries of the Party. Until 1956, Boleslaw Bierut was a key figure. The years of his reign are the time of Stalin—the era of terror and political executions. In the years 1956–1970 the country was governed by Wladyslaw Gomulka, a leader obedient to the USSR. The aforementioned anti-Semitic campaign was organised on his initiative in 1968. In 1970 his policy of austerity led to a bloodily suppressed workers' demonstration. After his resignation in 1970, power was taken for the next ten years by Edward Gierek, a supporter of economic openness to western Europe. In 1980, he was removed from power due to his leadership's inability to cope with the growing economic crisis, to a wave of strikes and the intensification of opposition activities. The last important figure of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) was general Wojciech Jaruzelski, who introduced martial law in December 1981. Criminal proceedings against Wojciech Jaruzelski have been pending since 2008. General Jaruzelski has been accused of a communist crime involving "leading a criminal military organisation" due to his introduction of martial law.

However, the 1980s are also, and perhaps above all, the years of Solidarity (*Solidarność*)—a trade union aimed at protecting workers' rights, but also a leading opposition organisation in Poland. Lech Walesa, a key opposition activist, was the leader of Solidarity. Opposition activities—labour strikes, amongst others—organised by Solidarity, led to Poland's independence from the communist regime in 1989. Evaluation of the method used to regain independence is still ambiguous. The compromise reached with the communist authorities, obtained by Solidarity, allowed the country to avoid bloody revolution; however, as a consequence, it also prevented the expression of an explicit condemnation of communism, which enabled too many of its former power players to achieve a safe, soft landing in the new reality.

But, undoubtedly, Solidarity played a key role in the spread of ideas of freedom also in the other countries of the Eastern Bloc. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the independence of other communist countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary were as a direct result of the events in Poland.

The Self of the nation, hidden beneath the surface, also contributed strongly to the survival of the identity of Poland its culture and of the Polish people. In Poland, in times of loss of independence, underground state structures had formed, operating in all the key areas: administrative, judiciary, military, education, culture, and even social services. The Polish Underground State was created both in times of the partitions—during the January Uprising in 1863—and during World War Two. These patterns were also used by the anti-communist opposition. Polishness was nurtured through underground education (learning the Polish language and the country's history), by religious education informally held in churches in spite of the reluctance of the authorities, by meetings of opposition groups organised illegally in private houses and in church premises—this enabled the nation's spirit to be saved. Splitting of the self into a part formally disclosed—the outside self—and a part in the shadow and depth—the hidden self—helped to keep its true identity. However, it should also be remembered that keeping the self split is very exhausting to the psyche and it has to leave its mark. A moderate level of recognition of formal political and social structures is still characteristic of Poles—creating new habits and trust requires time and work.

The new Polish reality dawned in 1989, leading to a regained independence and to the creation of the third Republic of Poland. Since 2001, Poland has been a member of the EU. Is this membership in another new structure a choice that will help Poland to build its long-term stability and strength? Certainly, the answer to this question is not simple. Why is this so? On the one hand, Poland is gaining enormous support in the form of cohesion funds, which allows the building of modern infrastructure, supports agriculture, increases innovation of companies, and develops the professional competencies of Poles. In times of crisis the EU funds are a very important form of support. However, it is worth remembering that the role of the funds is to increase the coherence of the member states and to create common operational standards. Therefore, the old EU member states, and companies that derive from them, also receive EU funds in a slightly hidden way, by performing contracts

paid from the EU budget and developing their business in the so-called new Union countries. Consequently, the topic of dependency returns. How profitable will the EU membership be from a long-term perspective? Assuming that the EU will survive and develop as an important political and economic structure, it seems reasonable to build interdependence. However, should a dissolution of the EU occur, Poland could again become less autonomous, as the country is strongly dependent on foreign capital and, therefore, easily “controlled” from outside. Time will show whether building dependency on the EU is a good strategy and whether Poland will be able to take care of its own independence and interests. Balancing a willingness to co-operate with a preservation of sovereignty in key areas of the country seems to be a good path to follow. The United States of Europe will not arise in the near future, since the EU is a structure in which it is impossible to discount individual interests. This is because of the rich historical heritage of its members, their linguistic diversity, and strong local and national identities. The EU is a club in which only sharp and mature personalities can be taken into account.

The future clash of the cultures and identities of eastern and western Europe is an inevitable phenomenon in Poland. The question of “who I should be”—the East or the West of Europe—will probably never receive a clear answer. Due to the dissimilarity between eastern and western culture, the inner conflict is inevitable. Dependence on one of the options requires suppression of the other, which raises the internal tension. Perhaps, however, the question itself is incorrectly posed. Is it necessary to choose? Indeed, defining one’s own identity is the proper way to gain maturity and independence: defining the Poland we want to form and the Poland we want to have. What do we want to take consciously from the worlds of eastern and of western Europe, as a mature person, as a mature country? What do we want to establish? And what do we want to contribute to the European Union’s common identity? Perhaps a return to historical roots (in a sense of regression), that is to say, taking a look at one’s own Slavic origin—with its hospitality, openness, spontaneity, flexibility, but also a lack of willingness to comply—could, with favour and acceptance be the way to build the strong self. As recent studies concerning the genetic origin of Europeans suggest, Poles are not only linguistically but also largely genetically Slavs, the one ethnic group present in Central Europe long before Christ. Additionally, present Polish lands were probably the cradle of the Slavs, from

which they have spread to the east and south of Europe, and partly also to the lands of the current east of Germany.

To sum up so far: it can be said that Poland and the Poles will need to address the following challenges in the area of identity: building its own, clearly defined and mature self, both subjective and substantive, and the ability to obtain a distanced, even historical, view of itself. Meeting these challenges will help to reduce anxiety and thereby increase self-awareness and a sense of the actions that need to be taken.

Idealisation

Poles were and still are, as history has repeatedly proven, ready to fight and even die for their heroic ideals. Ideals are the heart of the matter which has been uniting Poles for centuries. Idealisation, to some extent, allows the unbearable emptiness resulting from one's own weak ego to be disguised. According to Melanie Klein (Klein, 1952), idealisation is a defence mechanism, which protects one from destructive impulses through splitting objects into the "good" and the "bad". According to *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1996), idealisation is a "mental process, in which an object's qualities and value are elevated to the point of perfection. Identifying oneself to the idealised object contributes to the building up and enrichment of the ideal stages of a person (ideal self)." For centuries the Catholic Church in Poland has fulfilled an important, cohesive role. In 1656, at the Latin Cathedral in Lviv, the Polish King, John II Casimir, took a public oath in which he proclaimed the Virgin Mary the Queen of Poland.

Further examples of entrusting the country and the people to the Virgin Mary can be found in Polish history. It has always been an important event that has united the spirit of the nation. As a matter of fact, there are many examples of the important role of Christian ideals in shaping Polish identity. In the seventeenth century the first Republic of Poland gained the name "the Bulwark of Christianity" (*antemurale christianitatis*). This concept described accurately the situation of finding oneself in the centre of the expansion of different religions—mainly Muslim Turkey to the south but also Protestant Sweden to the north and Orthodox Russia to the east. In the Battle of Vienna, the Polish King John III Sobieski, commanding the joint forces of the Polish, Austrian, and German armies, defeated the Ottoman army, and, as many historians believe, saved Europe from Islamisation.

Protecting Christian values was, indeed, also an important Polish goal in later centuries. Cardinal Adam Sapieha, the “unbroken prince”, cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, and other clergymen, were Polish guides through the world of ideals. The Polish Pope, John Paul II, was the most important of these, and led the Poles to independence. The Pope, who saw Poland as a place where you can breathe with the two lungs of Europe, saw Poland’s mission as combining the traditions of east and west. John Paul II’s pilgrimages to Poland gathered together and united the crowds of believers. The Pope visited Poland eight times, including three times before the fall of communism, in 1979, 1983, and 1987. During a mass at Blonia Park, in Krakow in 1979, two million believers gathered. The spirit of the struggle for freedom was also fuelled by the Pope’s messages: “Do not be afraid” (after the election of the Pope) and “Let your Spirit descend and renew the face of the land, this land!” (the second pilgrimage to Poland, 1983). It is worth listening to a song by Joan Baez, “Many crimes of Cain”, from Agnieszka Holland’s movie *To kill a priest*. The song, which is available on YouTube, helps to understand how important the role of the Church and clergy, including the Solidarity chaplain Jerzy Popiełuszko who was murdered by the Security Service in 1984, was in the achievement of Polish independence. The movie is also worth seeing.

Has Poland already built an identity strong enough to become a link between eastern and western Europe, as Pope John Paul II wanted it to be? Certainly, one cannot build an identity based just on being a link, as this role can be reduced to merely being an errand boy, to put it bluntly, rather than a creator of the spirit of a common Europe. First, one must build a strong organism, able to breathe freely, so it can unite, synthesise, point in new directions, and, as the lungs of Europe, convert carbon dioxide into oxygen. It seems that Poland and the Poles have only recently embarked on the path towards a stable self that can rely on itself and on others.

Poland is, undoubtedly, a nation ready to make sacrifices, and Poles often more willing to trust their emotions rather than rationality. It seems that the Latin phrase *Gloria victis* (“Glory to the vanquished”) clearly describes Polish heroism and the willingness to fight to the death in the name of ideals. Relentless willingness to fight for the most important values, even in extremely difficult situations, has been proven by a large number of historical events. During World War Two, in September 1939, Poles heroically defended the Polish sea border on the peninsula

of Westerplatte and fought in the battle of Wizna with an estimated ratio of forces on both sides of one to forty. That battle was even called the Polish Thermopylae.² The famous Polish Fighter Squadron 303 was the most effective air squadron to take part in the Battle of Britain in 1940. Another piece of evidence is the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, in which the National Army soldiers defended Warsaw for sixty-three days in a dramatic and unequal struggle against the Nazis, in front of the “allied” troops of the Red Army, who waited nearby and did not extend military aid to the Polish soldiers. The motto “God, Honour, Country” was put on the banners of the Polish Army during World War Two, as a principle of loyalty to the state and based on the ideals and values. This extremely emotional motto says a lot about Polish readiness to achieve absolute mobilisation in difficult and extreme situations.

Speaking of idealisation and Polish readiness to follow great ideals, one cannot forget Solidarity and Lech Walesa (who, since the historic strike at the Gdansk shipyard in 1980, has been wearing in his lapel a small picture of Our Lady of Czestochowa).³ Only a nation ready to die for its ideals, who has the fight for freedom in its blood, is able to create such a strong liberation movement. Mass strikes began in Poland two years after the election of Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II, first in the military aircraft factory in Swidnik, in July 1980, and in the Gdansk shipyard, in August 1980. The strikes marked the beginning of a nine-year process, which ended with a historic victory—partially free parliamentary elections—in 1989.

However, idealisation and, associated with it, the mechanism of object splitting, can be also dangerous. It can easily elicit strong, destructive behaviour in accordance with the principle “he who is not with us, is against us”. Examples of activities aimed at eliminating differences, in order to protect the “good” object, are numerous. During the post-war period, elimination of National Army soldiers who were part of the Polish Underground State (which did not accept Soviet domination), and political activists subordinate to the Polish Government in exile based in London, was undertaken by NKVD (KGB) and the Polish communist authorities.

Another example of splitting was the aggression against people of Jewish descent, members of the communist party apparatus, which took place after Stalin’s death. That period is called the time of “purges” in the party. The communists of Jewish origin, both in the USSR and in Poland, were made solely responsible, and thus punished, for Stalinism

and its abuses. This was organised by their comrades who attempted to “cover” their own sins and escape responsibility. The complex, multithreaded, and ambiguous topic of Jewish participation in the formation and functioning of the communist movements in Poland has been comprehensively presented in a recent book *żydokomuna* (JudeoCommunism) by Paweł Śpiewak (2012). The author points out the need for mutual understanding, recognition of mutual guilt and entanglements, and the need to approach the often difficult past from many perspectives. Moreover, examples of splitting, idealisation and devaluation are still an important part of Polish politics, because, bearing in mind the above-mentioned fresh scars, it is easy to use fixed divisions—into western (liberal) and eastern (conservative) Poland, into people who were the beneficiaries of the communist system and those who fought for free Poland. Besides, some of these scars heal very slowly and this is especially so in the case of the untreated wounds. Poland is one of the countries in which the process of de-communisation did not take place and many past prominent people and intelligence agency officers have adjusted only too easily to the new reality, for example, conducting privatisation of state property on terms favourable to themselves. The interdependencies and relationships of modern elites and their sources of financing, are not always clear. Unfortunately, the perversity of the previous system is undoubtedly still a burden on the further journey Poland took in 1989.

*Poland between yesterday and tomorrow: establishing
a strong position*

Can we say that Poland is a borderline personality which recently has managed to mature, has finally recovered, and is now able to define its own boundaries and itself?

Perhaps Poland’s identity has matured. Maybe it is time for a more neurotic version of the self. It seems that the European Union is a club for self-focused neurotics. Covering the anxiety resulting from recently regained independence, building one’s own position and prestige, and increasing ownership and enrichment, would protect the recovered self in a more mature way. Social status and recognition, are important elements of the code used in the modern world. Besides, it appears that Poles build their own economic and social prestige rather effectively, ready as they are to work hard and to improve their standard

of living. The Paris macroeconomics research institute Coe-Rexecode announced that in 2010, among full-time employees, only Romanians and Hungarians worked more than Poles. Striving to achieve European standards of life requires non-standardised work. According to the latest Eurostat data from 2011, the real average Polish wage was only sixty-five per cent of the EU average. However, Poland, is rapidly reaching the level of Portugal and Greece, which is also related to the economic collapse of these countries. According to predictions, by 2014 Poland will have outstripped these countries. Poles—mainly young people in the age range of 24 to 34 years—are also willing to work abroad. If they cannot find a job in Poland, where in 2012 unemployment reached the level of thirteen per cent, they travel and try to find work abroad, mostly seasonal and short-term. The income from working abroad is an important support for families remaining in the country. Working abroad (mainly in Germany and the UK) is, apart from the profit-making motive, also linked to the desire to learn a foreign language and raise their qualifications, which can increase the chances of employment. The major Polish achievement in terms of building its own position is that of receiving the highest AAA credit rating—the level of the richest and most stable economies in the EU.

It is also worth mentioning that Poles educate themselves intensely and continuously raise their qualifications. According to the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP), in 2012, eighteen per cent of Poles aged eighteen to fifty-nine/sixty-four years had a university degree. It was as much as twenty-three per cent among women. This is in comparison to 2002 when only nine point nine per cent of Poles had higher education qualifications. In the context of a difficult Polish history, the important task is to use wisely the undeniable Polish abilities to build self-esteem. In this regard, it is vital to develop not just apparent competencies, which are characteristic of borderline personality disorder, but the real ones. Pretending to be someone else, being authorised by someone else (preferably some foreign institution), using a piece of someone else's ideal self, is not the goal here. The real goal is to build a real, strong self. It seems that both tendencies are now present in Poland. There is honestly earned money, reliable education, and real authority, but there is also some questionable business, poor education, and inadequate academic staff. The separation of these two tendencies, and the naming of associated facts, seems to be the basis for further effective development. Limiting perversion should definitely help us.

Polish women and the transformation of roles

Women are a very important asset for Poland, and Polish history demonstrates this well. Women in Poland have always looked after the house, the well-being and the financial situation of its residents. Men fought and died in battles over ideals and great causes. It is worth mentioning the recently published autobiography of Danuta Walesa, who raised eight children practically alone, while Lech Walesa was establishing Solidarity (*Solidarność*) and later on became one of the president's of the liberated country.

What are today's Polish women like? Certainly well-educated—as mentioned above, at least twenty-three per cent of women have higher education. Poland is one of the leading countries in regard to the number of women on management boards of companies. Every fourth chief finance officer is a woman, which gives a ratio of twenty-five per cent in comparison to an average global level of fourteen per cent. Perhaps Polish women contribute in a significant way to a good Polish economic condition. Research conducted by McKinsey management consulting firm shows that the participation of women in the management bodies of companies increases their competitiveness and brings real economic profits. The results of the McKinsey report (2010) demonstrate that the operational benefits of companies where gender balance at top management level occurs are fifty-six per cent higher than in those managed solely by men. Polish women are open to new technologies (they use the internet and mobile phones more often), they are mobile and ready to move from rural to urban areas. However, as a consequence it is hard for them to find a life partner. In Poland it is well-educated women from large cities and poorly educated men from the countryside who constitute the majority of single people. The cost of such high professional activity of Polish women can be a very low birth rate (209th out of 222 countries). It is difficult to assess to what extent the above-mentioned tendencies are or will prove positive in the end. Will women become the driving force of Polish innovation and development? Or maybe the low birth rate and the deterioration of men's position in relation to women will prove to be a self-destructive mechanism. As a result, the loss of balance between male and female dynamics of functioning can be a symptom of splitting—us—the good and brave women—and them—those bad, poor, and helpless men. As with all mechanisms of that kind, it can turn out to be destructive for the newly built self.

Optimism

A good forecast for the future is also the growing optimism among Poles. Research conducted by TNS OBOP—the Polish centre for public opinion research—in 2003–2012, has shown that percentage of people claiming that the Polish economy is developing (as opposed to the statement that it is undergoing a crisis), systematically grows.⁴ What is the cause of such growing optimism? Perhaps the increasing stabilisation, independence, and enrichment of the country? Poland can be compared to a person, who has lived modestly for many years with their needs reduced to minimum. Such a person does not need much to feel happy, enjoys many things, still remembering the time when they had almost nothing. A significant percentage of professionally active Poles remember the communist times—socialism, especially the 1980s, which people associate with real crisis—the empty shop shelves, food rationing, queues, and economic backwardness. The present crisis is a barely visible deviation from normality in comparison to the crisis of the 80s. This still represents the main point of reference for many Poles with regard to the current, relatively lesser, crisis. However, it is worth keeping in mind that for those generations raised after 1989, points of reference will be completely different. People from so-called generation Y, presently entering the labour market, are definitely more focused on themselves, on fulfilling their own needs, being more demanding. That is also a symptom of the current change. The question that remains is whether the new generation is ready to bear the weight of such dynamic Polish development.

The last question that would be worth asking concerns the fundamental issue. Is it possible to recover from borderline syndrome? How much of a borderline disorder derives from personal characteristics and how much is conditioned by the context in which a person exists? Especially so in the case of a country and nation, the context, determined by its location and the impact of its general geopolitical nature, cannot be avoided. Let us imagine a patient with borderline personality disorder, who cannot change the context within which he lives. He has been living in the same house for many years, with the same expansive neighbours, for centuries quite indifferent to his needs, and it is obvious that he will always have to live there.

George Friedman, the CEO of the American company Stratfor, interviewed by Polish weekly magazine *Polska The Times*, said that Poland

should not ignore her own geopolitical location, because geopolitics is a “to-be-or-not-to-be” matter for Poland. According to Friedman, history teaches that we can never be sure that all the bad times are behind us. In his opinion, the membership of the EU and of NATO give Poland only an illusory sense of security, which is justified only when Russia is weak. In the event of the dissolution of the existing European structures, Germany will start forging and deepening economic ties with Russia. The NordStream gas pipeline, which was built along the bottom of the Baltic Sea between Russia and Germany, bypassing Poland, is a good example of this. In such a case, the situation of Poland could become difficult, and its self would be threatened again. According to Friedman, investment in military resources, in order to be a respected partner, and seeking allied powers, is a good national strategy for Poland.

Peter Sloterdijk, German philosopher, rector of the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe, presents a slightly different path for Poland—less focused on building its own strength and more on “exporting” certain ideas into Europe. Sloterdijk believes that Poland can provide Europe with the concepts of religious community, brotherhood, family spirit, and clan-ship. Moreover, Poland has a story to tell, a story of misery, as befits a true neurotic, which in the European narrative is very important. In an interview for the magazine *Kultura Liberalna*, in February 2012, the German philosopher said that

Europe is a club of humiliated empires (...) Germans lounged in a disturbingly comfortable manner, in their role of an universal culprit. Austrians and Greeks export to Europe resentment. Hungarians export—at least those anti—European ones—aggressive resentment. (...) A good European is the one who understands what humiliation is and draws conclusions from that. You Poles could be such good Europeans. You can join the club of humiliated empires as a decent neurotic because of your Catholicism and the historical traumas.⁵

Is Poland ready to join the neurotic part of Europe? Has it built a strong enough self to be able to defend its borders, especially in historically difficult moments? What will be the future shape of the EU, in the context of separatist movements in Spain (Catalonia, the Basque Country), Britain (Scotland, but also in the case of the United Kingdom leaving the EU), and France (Corsica)? It seems that a common EU

identity is a myth that does not apply in the face of reality, especially in demanding times of crisis. Europe is a group of strong national identities, historically and linguistically established, that, for the time being, follow their own national interests. The development of Poland will depend in the future primarily on the ability to build its own self-esteem, acceptance of its own fears and traumas, and paying attention to the strongly ingrained defence mechanisms. It is difficult to make a complete recovery from a borderline syndrome ... Perhaps buffering, and oscillating, between neurotic West and psychotic East is our role?

Has Poland recovered, and lost its vulnerability? Can it protect itself and preserve the pace and the strength of its own development? Can this reconstructed self mark its presence clearly on the international stage? Our answer to the above question is a definitive "Yes". Poland has strong historical foundations. It also has—like other European nations—a sense of bygone power, one that was built on a co-existence of people, cultures, and religions. All this makes Poland a player who has to be taken into account. Historical, centuries-old experience of building unity in diversity, which is consistent with the spirit of the EU, is something that Poland can certainly contribute to the common heritage.

In addition, Poland, with its understanding of the Eastern mentality, can also play an important role in the future, in the case of the accession of new member states to the EU—possibly Ukraine, Belarus, Turkey, and perhaps even Russia. Certainly, Polish self-esteem, shaken during the last two centuries, by a 123-year period of partitions, and the period of nearly fifty years under communism, requires rebuilding and nurturing. Poles, however, are diligent and, above all, flexible, easily adapting to a variety of conditions and expectations, which can serve as an important asset in today's rapidly changing world.

Poland is a fast and dynamically developing country with a significant past that seems to correspond well to a popular saying: "What does not kill you, makes you stronger." Keep it up!

Notes

1. See Andrzej Leder, *Psychoanalysis of a cityscape—a case of post-traumatic stress disorder—the city of Warsaw*. Chapter Ten in Brunning, H., (2012).

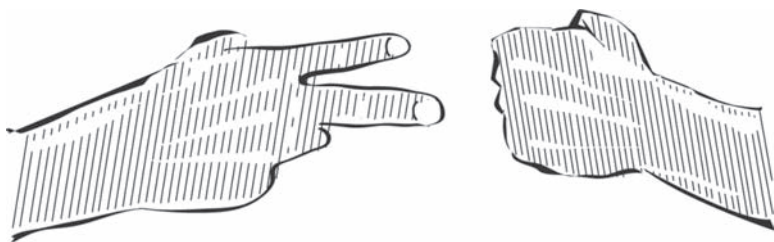
2. Listen to a very emotional song played by the Swedish group Sabaton about the battle of Wizna, with a meaningful title—"40:1" (accessible on YouTube; lyrics in English).
3. Known as the Polish Madonna.
4. In 2003 16% of respondents claimed that Polish economy is rather improving and is not in crisis; in 2012 26% agreed with this statement despite the world crisis. Source TNS OBOP.
5. See Chapter Eleven in this book by Richard Morgan—Jones.

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PART III

THE POWER AND VULNERABILITY OF GLOBAL FINANCE



CHAPTER ELEVEN

The vulnerability of the European nation state and its citizens in a time of humbling

Richard Morgan-Jones

Abstract

This paper is based on research into European economics and politics on the basis of ten months travelling in ten countries, as well as on four workshops run in Europe.

Two hypotheses will be explored:

- a. It is possible to discern psychodynamic evidence that unresolved humiliation trauma is being re-evoked and recycled by attempts to find solutions and cures through the tyranny of austerity measures. But the question will be asked whether these are “chosen trauma” (Volkan, 2010) which may be at the heart of the foundation matrix (Foulkes, 1973) of the European Community.
- b. The exploration of political and economic leadership in the crisis in the European Union builds on the notion of society as a large group proliferating crises of identity. From a systemic perspective it is possible to analyse the nation states of Europe protesting with regressive nationalism, refusing collaboration by engaging in economic warfare while at the same time attempting rescue packages.

The protest could be seen as defensive denial of their humbling at the hands of the over-ambitious aspects of the European single currency project and the demise of the potency of the nation state.

The concluding section reflects on these issues and tries to distinguish the recycling of humiliation trauma from defence against the experience of being humbled.

Introduction

The paper originated from organisational consulting exploring how wider societal dynamics intrude under the skins of organisations. This arose from development of Organisational Role Analysis that I have termed Embodied Role Analysis as a way of relating the experience of being a bodily self to belonging to the wider organisational body, whose skin is permeated by a turbulent surrounding environment. My focus has been on the relationship between the body of the organisation as a whole in its particular context and the experience of stresses experienced mentally and physically at work, described in a book, *The Body of the Organisation and its Health* and other papers.¹

Conducting four workshops (2011–12) in different European countries around the title of this book, it was possible to witness how European austerity encroaches under the skin of organisations and the way people embody their roles. Strong emotional feelings of anger, helplessness, receiving and participating in shameless behaviour, submission, and loss of dignity characterised many responses. Among other experiences, people described a range of helplessness, including: giving up the unequal struggle and volunteering to be sick or seeking redundancy; feeling ashamed at the political election of corrupt leaders; working to rule in obedience. Other responses suggested emotions of protest and anger, including: refusing to co-operate with implementing cuts even if it jeopardised the organisation's survival; adopting a narrowly informed nationalistic, regionalist, or political ideology criticising and excluding all others; intolerance of others; disrupting the task of the organisation and collaboration with others; bullying and tyrannical behaviour.

These findings were echoed in the reports from Listening Post meetings organised by the Organisation for Promoting Understanding in Society (OPUS) in 2012.² The report described failures in political

and economic leadership, leading to “the experience of extreme fragmentation disconnectedness and loss of society with members left in a highly depressed and hopeless situation” (Stapley & Rickman 2012, p. 96).

These experiences speak of the group dynamics of fight and flight driven by adrenalin-fuelled anxiety and fear in the turbulent organisational environment. They also echo experiences of the vulnerability of shaming, shamelessness, and humiliation that attack identity and are central themes in this chapter.

This explores the macro dynamics of the political, social, and economic context that undermine the relatedness of European citizens.³ It has been creatively expressed in Listening Posts whose task has been to gather themes and hypotheses that link the experience of the citizen to the internalisation and projection of society’s dynamics. Group relations conferences similarly explore the wider context of social and political dynamics within the conference system. It is also part of the work of social dreaming matrices whose search for the potential to “think new thoughts” has been themed with wider social and political dimensions well illustrated by the recent work in running social dreaming matrices with people involved in the Occupy movement in the UK.

Europe as a large group

The crisis

Europe is in crisis. On the surface this crisis is an economic one that began with the 2007–8 banking credit crisis that threatened all currencies. This exposed the failure of financial institutions and government regulatory bodies to contain behaviour motivated by extremes of greed and fear.⁴ Since 2008 European leadership has struggled to provide the legal and financial basis for bailout funds to indebted banks and even governments. To date funds have been provided to Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece. These loans have been designed by the “troika” of the European Central Bank (ECB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Council of Europe comprising the leaders of the central members of the eurozone. A European Stability Fund has been forged that will enable large payments to provide liquidity to banks and governments to prevent the euro as a currency collapsing in the global market.

The conditions demanded for funds have been the source of major dispute. Northern European nations have taken a strong lead in insisting that governments who receive these loans instigate major overhauls of their economic structural debt as a proportion of GDP. Austerity measures include reducing the cost of welfare and the state and reforming labour markets to push for comparable structures of work, pensions, benefits, and welfare provision for the unemployed across member states. A shift in the wrong direction in interest rates can put a nation at one stroke into financial jeopardy. Nevertheless, these measures have been assessed as failing to reduce debt as a proportion of GDP.⁵ Protest by citizens against these measures harnesses anger against feeling humiliated.

These drastic actions have placed the burden of the emotional, social, and economic costs on large numbers of employees made redundant, particularly in the public sectors across Europe and especially in indebted nations.

In reaction, there has grown up a series of informal protest movements across Europe. In Portugal there have been demonstrations against new tax and employment laws; in Spain the 15-M "Indignados" movement has occupied central city squares to protest. In Greece, where the rapid approach of poverty has been felt most keenly, there have been violent clashes with police against the pace of reforms that are already effecting the reliability of health care services. In Britain an Occupy camp has protested against the bailouts to the City banks while policies have attacked the increasing number of welfare claimants.

Hoggett (2009, pp. 91–93) suggests that integrating action with reflection is key for political achievement. In the "The 'bubbling up' of subterranean politics in Europe", Kaldor and Selchow (2012) identify two types of political movement. The first they describe as being expert initiatives with a variety of aims and emphases mostly critical of current economic models and solutions for Europe and its vulnerable nations.⁶

The second model they describe as grass-roots or subjective political initiatives where expression and experiment with new democratic forms hallmarks innovative forms of communication, action, and decision-making as well as claiming and using open public spaces.⁷ This research explores political realities moving towards embodiment in the face of economic and political failure. Both types of political movement seek to escape the cruelty of the pace of austerity measures being implemented

by seeking new directions for understanding and action, towards which this chapter is a contribution.

So what might this short chapter seek to clarify in order to get under the skin of this complex crisis and to include the emotional experience of the citizens of Europe's nation states?

Sado-masochism in austerity measures

Group relations experiences and socio-analysis provide a wealth of experience with which to view societal dynamics, revealing that such perspectives are often shared by commentators in the media. I first became aware of the psychoanalytic interpretations of the sado-masochism within austerity measures through the journalistic writings of Larry Elliott, London Guardian economics correspondent, writing under the headline: "Angela Merkel has the whip hand in an orgy of austerity", where he concluded with: "This sort of aberrant behaviour is now commonplace across the eurozone ... Perhaps a Freud or a Jung could explain what is happening: it certainly defies rational economic analysis" (Elliott, 2012).⁸

Hypothesis one: humiliation trauma

That the shaming and humiliating consequences of twentieth century warfare has left the nation states of Europe in a psychological state of post-traumatic stress which has been undigested. This has created a ghost of history that continues to visit itself on relations between states in the form of economic warfare and competition over market domination that undermines attempts to resolve the current crisis. This dynamic will be explored in terms of the after-effects of both invading wars in central Europe and civil wars in Spain and Greece. This I have conceptualised as humiliation trauma. This repeats its suffering and risks becoming a fixated chosen trauma (Volkan, 2010) that empowers a sense of grudge and entitlement, when in reality there is a wider force of history that is shaping the fate of the European nation state and its interrelations, described in hypothesis two.

The humiliations of war, and the invasions and the experience of nations in Europe being invaded and occupied by military regimes, have created the need for peaceful settlements. Yet it is worth asking whether

there is evidence that the attempts at peace and economic co-operation in fact resolve such trauma or only mask such humiliations, which are then denied as unconscious emotional disturbances and so are repeated. This chapter now explores these dynamics in European history.

Spain and its civil war⁹

Historian Walter Benjamin held the notion that “When the angel of history cannot perform his or her duty the process of history produces unsolved conflicts and losses that are not yet mourned, which, as we know, is what ghosts are made of.”¹⁰

In writing about the effects of the civil war in Spain and its resolution in the *Transición* to a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, Giles Tremlett has this to say:

“If the Transición was a success, it was because Spaniards made a supreme effort to find consensus. That effort was driven, to a large degree, by the Civil War ghosts still haunting so many Spanish households. The divisions now visible in Spain have much to do with the release of those historic constraints.” (Tremlett, 2010)

“The amnesty is simply a forgetting ... an amnesty for everyone, a forgetting by everyone for everyone.” He comments: “The proposal was not just amnesty, but also amnesia.”¹¹

An example of the crucial link between the experience of individuals and the experience of a whole society is that of the judiciary in Spain, which has barred international lawyer Balthazar Garzon from practicing because he was investigating war crimes from the Francoist era. The campaign against Garzon humiliates and de-legitimises those who wish to discover the truth about the past, and sets citizens against each other.

Vamik Volkan links the experience of collective traumatic humiliation to narcissistic damage and a resulting sense of ruthless entitlement (Volkan, 2004, 2010). Massive corruption has besieged Spain in terms of governance and the manic exploitation of cheap European interest rates creating vast public and private debts and the housing bubble. A sense of entitlement to having money and resources now has been fuelled by resentment about unresolved past losses. These in turn also fuel embattled relations between the independence-seeking regions, particularly

in the Catalanian and Basque regions, where the ghosts of anti-centrist and anti-Franco sentiment still live. One of the key emotional contributors to this protest is the unresolved resentment towards the centrist austerity measures precisely because they are being implemented by a government (led by The People's Party) associated with leaders who once supported the Franco regime and who now seek to silence investigation into a lost generation. These conflicts are only now beginning to surface.

Civil war and its buried humiliation trauma

The Spanish example of the attempt to forget atrocity by managing minds and secrets is played out in other civil wars in Europe, including in Ireland, the Balkans, and Greece. It is a tragic consequence that has also been witnessed in countries where foreign invasion has not just humiliated the citizens of nation states but has turned them against each other.

Following the invasion of France and the capitulation of the government, Vichy France was encouraged to collude with the invading German enemy rather than to continue to fight, as did the *réistance* movements. As war ended there were appalling scenes of humiliation of women who had had relationships with soldiers from the occupying forces. It was as if the defeat and withdrawal of the German army gave permission for retaliation against the nearest enemy, as a way of dealing with the humiliation of invasion. Such scenes were also repeated in other occupied nations. That such ghosts continue to haunt national pride is most clearly witnessed in the dilemma facing Germans about their own post-war identity.

Germany

The humiliations of the Treaty of Versailles (1918) led to the lack of a final peace treaty resolving the borders and military independence of Germany after World War Two until 1990. Fear of German militarism once more engulfed the continent, resulting in Russia forces occupying East Germany and British, American, and French forces occupying West Germany after the war (Frei, 2008).

The horrors of the Holocaust have provided the clearest model for humiliation trauma. This hallmarked twentieth century terror in its attempt to obliterate the Jewish right to identity and has, forever,

shaped the collective experience of humiliation trauma. One Holocaust Day, a Jewish leader being interviewed on the BBC news was asked the question: "If the message from history is *never again*, what is it that is never to be repeated and what is the core of the message to be learned?" The response was both profound and moving, and one of the key inspirations for this chapter: "That nobody should feel entitled to feel big at the expense of others." For me this is the essence of what it means to be humble and humbled in recognising the need for identity in others. Herein lies authority for the vulnerability of humility, but not humiliation.

After the Second World War, containment of German militarism and of the risks of invasion from the Soviet Russian controlled east provided a framework that, along with the loans from the US Marshall plan, enabled the German industrial machine and economy to recover and become the leading force in Europe. The war had left conflicted nations financially and emotionally exhausted. Meanwhile the USA had developed a huge weapons economy through loans and exports and had ended the war in a position to lead Europe into the second half of the century. Its capacity to develop an efficient and peaceful economy grew on the back of financial loans and arms deals with European nations and evoked their rivalry and envy.

Germany worked to repair its reputation after the horrors of the Holocaust and as a European invader; however, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that a new generation of Germans forced their parents to face their own culpability in having supported Hitler's wars and Nazi atrocities.¹² It is striking to this day that hardly an evening goes past on German television without an investigation into the terror inflicted on Jews and other political dissidents.

Sixty-eight-year-old Bernhard Schlink¹³ writes: "We Germans tend to prefer to see ourselves as world citizens of a world society ... or Europeans rather than as Germans." His conclusion is that Germans find the European crisis agonising because the country has been able to retreat from its guilt by hurling itself into the European project rather than facing the sometimes overwhelming feelings of historical responsibility (Kate Connolly, *The Guardian*, 19 September 2012). This speaks of a nation at odds with its own identity.

A desire not to repeat the past has encouraged the strong German ethic of living self-sufficiently within one's means at both an individual and collective level. The fear of inflation and the poverty that caused

the rise of a fascist government in the 1930s still haunts Germans and is a key source of the austerity culture which they are eager to export to the rest of Europe in the European Union.

In 1989, Germany was prepared to sacrifice the power of the Deutschmark, supported by a strong economy, in return for agreement on unification with Eastern Germany. However, there was another relational dynamic at work. The eurozone would enable Germany to use its trade surplus to make loans at advantageous rates to Southern European nations who could then purchase German goods, thus boosting its economy further. What began as the Marshall plan, with substantial US investment in German industry, became the means of German manufacturing firms¹⁴ taking market share from competitors on a large scale. This trade surplus has turned Germany into the central banker in Europe without Europe having addressed its tactics of keeping wages and internal demand low in order to capitalise on developing and sustaining new markets in Southern Europe.¹⁵

Greece's entry into the eurozone

One of the hotly debated aspects of the European politics is whether Greece should ever have been admitted to the eurozone. Historic traumas and humiliations for the Greek nation have been many, including invasion and loss of territory. Occupation for 500 years by the Turkish Ottoman Empire created a Greek culture of profound longing for national unity and independence, and a determination to find ways to avoid paying taxes to Ottoman overlords. It is a culture that has never quite left Greece, with the result that the elected democratic government struggles to collect adequate tax. This bequest has resulted in corruption and a deeply divided nation. Together with dependency on military support against further Turkish invasion, honour was betrayed in the failure of the West to return Greek land as promised at the Treaty of Versailles. The occupation and plunder by German and Italian forces (1939–45), the atrocities of the Greek Civil War (1946–9) between communists and nationalists, and the submission to dictatorial and military rule of the colonels (1967–73) all added to national demoralisation. Entitlement to extract maximum benefits from a state that contains corrupt politicians who are beyond redress, characterises some of the anarchy in Greece, undermining fair relations within the state (Manolopoulos, 2011).

In forming the EU, principles underlying reconciliation in western Europe included the aim: "To make war between member states not only unthinkable, but materially impossible". The rules that were set for converging economies to prove eligibility to join the euro were clearly set out in the Maastricht Treaty of 1991 which launched the common currency. These included that the budget deficit had to be under three per cent, with public debt under sixty per cent of GDP.¹⁶ In the run-up to the euro's launch it was not the economies currently causing the crisis—Greece, Spain, and Ireland—that failed these conditions; rather it was Italy, Germany, and Belgium, and later France whose breaches with this Stability and Growth Pact passed without sanction. Despite divergence from these criteria being a recurring problem before 1992 in the years of the ERM, it was hoped that there would be convergence afterwards, even in the absence of any clear mechanism for containing it.

For Greece, the achievement of their economic returns was achieved with the consultation of investment bankers Goldman Sachs, who reportedly helped them manipulate their balance sheets in order to be included within these criteria (Bastasin, 2012). Not least, they have been described as selling them a default swap of one billion US dollars, thus mortgaging the Greek Government in a lucrative investment for their "consultants" while at the same time providing Europe with a balance sheet hiding half their national debt (Bastasin, 2012; Manolopoulos, 2011).

From a systems psychoanalytic perspective we can see that hope attempted to triumph over achievement, that a blind eye (Steiner, 1993) was turned to doubts about Greece's figures and that the lure of low interest rates and currency charges within the eurozone encouraged perverse (Long, 2008) accounting, which in Greece was already a well recognised "secret". In short, there were neither political nor economic means to contain damage to the project and, more than that, no emotional container that could allow rational thought to see the pitfalls of the project. In the current crisis we can see the core nations in the EU desperately struggling to catch up by creating central bodies to collect bailout funds after the event. Such attempts at rigid containment have been forced through by belated construction of convergence mechanisms and institutions in an austerity drive.

These are signs of defence against the emotions of humiliation trauma, by forgetting past pains of warfare without having learned from the risks of nations seeking to dominate the autonomy of others.

Again, as in Spain, a future was forced at the expense of ignoring the past and the present. This account now leads to an exploration of the dynamics and consequences of humiliation trauma following war.

The nature of vulnerability in humiliation trauma

To feel humiliated, ashamed, or shameful is to feel that one is seen by oneself, or by others, as unacceptable and worthy of rejection. This involves being gripped by fantasies of unworthiness with an ego-crushing annihilation, described by Mollon as self-murder syndrome (2002). Key is the sensation of being looked at and judged by a shaming other. This is epitomised by the dangerous "evil-eye" in some cultures, giving form to an infant's fear of mother's disapproval and terror that she has seen the infant's hatred (Ayers, 2003). This fundamentally undermines the capacity to integrate aggression and hatred into love and turns hatred upon the self.

Psychoanalyst Donald Campbell has argued that when a child is abused, neglected, or bombarded with parental anxiety, it is an attack on the shame shield. This shield protects the growing child from premature impingement and fear of annihilation (Campbell, 2008, p. 76). The threat to physical survival produces the instinct to belong to a group for bodily and emotional protection. This, Bion (1962) described as the protomental matrix for the survival aspect of basic assumption behaviour, signified by the fact that "what was physical and what was psychological could not be distinguished" (Bion, 1962). It is for this reason that humiliation trauma belongs not just to the individual but to the collective and why national invasion evoked such a profound experience of being shamed.

The internal psychodynamics of humiliation trauma: splitting the ego, recycling sado-masochism

Here I am arguing that the experience of violation or invasion at the hands of another person, group, or nation creates the collective experience of humiliation and shame. But the question is how, exactly, does it happen that it is associated with devastating and tragic loss?

In a paper that has been described as the original thinking of all object relations (Ogden, 2002), Freud distinguished between mourning and melancholia (1915/1917). On the face of it they appear similar, with

dejection, as well as loss of libido, vitality, and an important attachment figure. What differentiates melancholia is that the person is tormented by a shameless self-hatred that also aggressively alienates others. Freud suggests that this is the consequence of a taboo on hating the lost person, resulting in an internal split that precludes the possibility of moving through grieving and integrating and learning from losses.

What is split off, internally, and enacted externally is a double hatred. One part becomes an idealised internal tyrant that hates the lost person for dying. The other part hates the self more for feeling it and so curses itself. This results in a denigrated, vulnerable, and depleted part of the ego. The internalised superego, rather than comprising the ego ideals of a normal conscience, may threaten aggressive obliteration of the self, like a jealous god demanding sacrifice. To deal with this agonising internal war zone, one part is projected out of consciousness. This results in a victim unconsciously seeking a version of their lost persecutor in what Hopper describes as traumatophilia (Hopper, 2012). A tyrannical sadist is sought to manically triumph over vulnerability, if not their own internally, then externally someone else's. Hence the internal conflict deals with the split by projective identification of vulnerability into an other. This depletes the ego of energy and identity and recycles the melancholic conflict. In consequence, sado-masochism is enshrined in repeated torment and persecution as internal destructive objects are adhered to ferociously.

It is these dynamics of individual and collective humiliation trauma that are a key source of political tyrannies and terrorism, as individuals cluster in herds to deal with primitive and violent emotions they cannot contain. Such a dynamic echoes the analysis provided by psychoanalyst Herbert Rosenfeld (1987) describing the psychotic mechanism whereby the superego inflates and splits into a terrifying internal gang that has as many different identities. I think of this as a mechanism to attack each and every one of the potential instincts that might provide a core identity that is so needed but so feared. In this way individuality is lost and the herd takes over. This lies behind many populist and nationalistic political movements.

Externally, what bullying behaviour shamelessly exploits in intimidating a victim is the victim's vulnerability. Perpetrators exploit many experiences of being abused by others, giving a manic entitlement to exact revenge. Victims, on the other hand, are vulnerable because of being ashamed of being bullied. This shame is due to inner conflict about

vulnerability being exposed and mocked. The consequence of such a catastrophe is to feel turned inside out, as if without a skin, because the inner self-attacker will have been seen and scorned (Morgan-Jones, 2010a; Steiner, 1993).

From a group or social perspective it is possible to see the need to split emotional responses following trauma or catastrophic loss. These are projected onto the skin of the group in a way that represents what Anzieu described as having a bruised skin (see Anzieu, 1989; Morgan-Jones, 2010a, Ch. 4). Perhaps we should say bruised or bruising, both as passive recipient and active perpetrator.

These dynamics are vividly described in developments to Bion's basic assumption theories of group and social dynamics: Turquet's One-ness, Lawrence and colleagues Me-ness, and Hopper's Incohesion (Hopper, 2003). I have elsewhere suggested that these dynamics describe, in essence, aspects of Bion's protomental matrix from which the basic assumptions arise. These dynamics describe attacks, often violent or at least violating, on the containing skin of groups in a way that is traumatic, shaming, and humiliating. It is this that embodies the crustacean and amoeboid (thick- and thin-skinned) violent defences that Hopper has described in the oscillating dynamics of aggregation and massification (Hopper, 2012).

Perhaps a more important source for the psychoanalytic understanding of recycled post-war humiliation trauma is the work of Vamik Volkan, who has engaged in understanding nations torn by warfare and atrocity. The collective experience of shaming invasion or civil war, he suggests, recycles violent and annihilating group identities that seek merger and differentiation in alternating cycles of incohesive panic states. Volkan has produced a powerful analysis of what he describes as the *chosen traumas* with which a national group hysterically casts its mythological identity around historical incidents where it was the victim of invasion or betrayal by another such group (Volkan, 2002, 2004, 2010). The shape of the violence in racism and in genocide can now be explored with this understanding of attacks on the very right of a group to have a collective skin within which to live at all. It also provides a way of prising a group away from its narcissistic attachment to past humiliations.

Psychoanalytic reflections on trauma and its destructive consequences can provide us with tools for understanding the post-traumatic consequences of war. The torture of endless recycling of trauma is mirrored

in the experience of a nation occupied by military invasion. People are put into intolerable conflicts about how much to work with invading forces, thus setting them against each other. There is the double humiliation of the pride of a nation being shamed. They are not able to defend themselves. Meanwhile internal conflicts are set up that last down the generations, as families and communities turn on each other, leading to shameful secrets that recycle these traumas.

Before moving on, I want to signal one of the risks of how this initial hypothesis might be used. Psychoanalysis, group relations, and systemic interventions have placed emphasis on boundaries and careful contracting for appropriate use of systems psychoanalytic understandings. One response in Germany to its need to face the traumatic way sections of the population were treated in the Nazi years has been to dose subsequent generations with education programmes to warn them of the dangers of fascism, genocide, and racism. These programmes risk bombarding and flooding the population. However, this may be one way in which anxieties of guilt and shame are passed down through generations by unthinking education that may retraumatise or alienate new generations. Providing a framework—educational, therapeutic, or group relations—to face the past is voluntary for its participants and run within boundaries tailored to emerging awareness. Any educative process informed by psychoanalysis would advocate careful attention to allowing emotions to emerge and be processed within carefully managed boundaries so that the dynamics of shame and shamelessness are understood as live experience that can be faced and worked through.

Eastern Europe

Nineteenth century disputes about national boundaries vied for control of the multi-ethnic areas of Eastern Europe. These were followed by the invasion, under the anti-Slavic policies of the Nazi Third Reich that wrested control of Eastern Europe and involved Britain and the West in a war to contain its imperial ambitions of conquering Europe. Following the end of the war, Stalinist Russia's took revenge on the German invasion of its territories by sweeping into Romania, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and East Germany, as well as into the Baltic States. This created totalitarian systems and violation of borders that were vicious to national identities and human dignity and

cemented humiliation trauma in Eastern Europe that survives beyond the end of communism.¹⁷

Italy

What humiliates and shocks thinking and sensitive Italians today, is the extent to which the electorate has been in thrall to Silvio Berlusconi's leadership.¹⁸ Such submission could be seen as a throw-back to the traumas and humiliations of Italy in the Second World War, ruled by Mussolini's dictatorship allied to Hitler's, being invaded by British and Americans from the south, then changing sides and being overrun by German militarism, against which they fought a rearguard action in the final stages of the war.

Another possible analysis of Berlusconi's power at the ballot box suggests that he exploited the need for national unity. The message Forza Italia delivered was the right wing capitalist message of freedom for the citizen against the state being too costly, too influential, and too concerned to support the European project (Shin & Agnew, 2012). The united nationalist alliance Forza Italia harnessed was between the conservative voters in the affluent north and north west of Italy and the more traditional southern voters, who made a pact against the power of Rome in the centre. The shift towards the political need for new coalition parties coincided with the Communist party losing votes following Soviet Russia's rapprochement with western capitalist democracy, the end of the eastern bloc, and disillusion with the power of the church in Italy (Shin & Agnew, 2008) (Shin & Agnew, 2012).

Rather than humiliation trauma, an alternative interpretation suggests opportunistic taking advantage of an electoral system and geopolitical circumstances based on a divide and rule approach to politics. What voters seemed to want, in the face of the threats to the nation state becoming less powerful, was a leader potent against the outside world. Berlusconi and his message filled that bill. This provides us with a valuable discussion of a different hypothesis to approach the second part of this paper.

Link between two hypotheses

Psychoanalysis has long been aware of the traumatising consequences of narcissistic wounding. The culture of narcissism is the drastic

attempt to erect defences against loss of identity. This follows the sense of annihilation created by the experience of being bereft of a relational community, or, indeed, national skin, that holds the self and groups together, especially under stress. The kind of catastrophic loss of identity that war trauma creates leads to narcissistic defences in which there is either hopeless submission, for fear of being exposed again in a similar manner, or else the attempt to create a coherent identity through self-aggrandisement to be bigger than others at their expense. It is this dynamic that I wish to suggest has accompanied the post-war traumas of the twentieth century and their choice of representative leadership.

The first hypothesis grounds European dynamics in the past with unresolved psychological conflicts. It belongs to an older generation. Perhaps psychoanalysts should be wary of colluding with this backward-facing interpretation, lest it help perpetuate the view that the citizens of Europe will never be freed from emotional conflict and ready to move on. Political development is not psychoanalysis, even though the one is shaped by the other. History *does* move citizens on and demands from them that the future be confronted, even in the face of unresolved narcissistic wounds from the past. This is the clinical task of psychoanalysis—to challenge people to see their pathological narcissistic defences. So it could be for Europeans in facing the future.

My first hypothesis has attempted to address the psychodynamics of Europe as a large group. If Europe were an organisational system and we its internal consultants, we would also need to address what is going on in the wider context in terms of the relations between the nation states and the wider global economy. To this we now turn.

Hypothesis two: humbling of the nation state and its citizens

The states of Europe are not the grand imperial nations they once were. Palaces, castles, government institutions all shout out the huge investment in what has since become the faded grandeur of former imperialist and colonialist powers. Most are museums and heritage sites dedicated to past glories. This phenomenon reveals pre-twentieth century imperial monarchs austere taxing their subjects to create images of power and wealth, pointing to past triumphs at the expense of others. Today they speak of faded glory, a loss with which European nations are still coming to terms.

By the twentieth century, battles between nation states had become ideological conflicts. Philip Bobbitt,¹⁹ an American strategic thinker who provides a radically new interpretation of the history of nations (2002, 2008), argues that the twentieth century was dominated by a century-long epochal war beginning in 1914 and not ending until 1990. He argues that the warfare was between three ideologies: communism, fascism, and parliamentary democracy. Within this epochal war he includes two world wars, the Spanish and Greek civil wars, the cold war, and the wars in the Balkans. The second hypothesis in this chapter derives from his thinking.

The transformation of the nation state into a market state

What resolved these wars eventually was the 1990 Treaty of Paris that established the unification of Germany where the allies from the Second World War, USA, France, Britain, and Russia at last withdrew their military occupation and permitted Germany to redraw its boundaries. This not only settled ideological disputes about models of government in Europe, it also heralded the demise of the bounded nation states whose commitment is to parliamentary democracy and welfare capitalism. Bobbitt traces the global changes that have radically shaped nations. Fast global communication and transfer of finance across borders through computer technology, along with economies in transport, has enabled world trade on a totally new scale. Nations have lost their boundaries but also their identities.

Globally, of the 100 largest economies less than half (forty-six) are nation states. Global control and takeover by large international enterprises are now able to hold governments to ransom. This accompanies the creation of investment banking, which not only supplies capital, but a whole array of investment and gambling opportunities for surplus cash seeking rents and returns. The sheer volume of this investment trade out-weighs financial transactions for goods and services by at least fifty times (Lietaer, 2001).

The pattern has been established of indebted countries endeavouring to raise money on the capital markets to pay for purchases from the wealthier exporting nations (e.g., in Europe: Germany, Netherlands, and France). They then borrow from those nations who profit from high interest rates, but seek to control the situation so that their client countries do not become bankrupt and cease buying their exports

and paying their loans. The wealthier, more efficient, nations have a controlling hand in this dynamic. By keeping wages low and exporting more, while strangling domestic demand, they create a surplus which is then loaned to less efficient nations to purchase debt and goods. A vicious spiral of economic warfare is hidden behind the ambition of international single currency ideology with no restorative recall to recognition of its dynamic and no justice to contain the spiral within prevailing neo-liberal capitalism.

The vision and ambition of the European Union

However much the European Union was created as a means of avoiding and containing future possible wars, it was also driven by global ambition. As Romano Prodi put it in 2002, speaking about the power of world currencies:

“The two poles are the dollar and the euro. That is the political meaning of the single European currency” (Quoted in Manolopoulos, 2011).

This vision was enhanced during 1989–1990, pivotal years in twentieth century European history’s ending of military conflict. The Russian policy of glasnost and perestroika met western rapprochement from West Germany led by Willi Brandt. In consequence, six Eastern bloc nations, including Eastern Germany, struggled out from under the dominant control of the Soviet Union towards their own independence, joining NATO and the European Union.

A condition of German Unification was that Germany relinquish the Deutschmark as a dominant currency in Europe and adopt the euro in a way that would reduce the power of the Bundesbank, the central German bank. It is not often acknowledged that this “horse trade” of diplomacy enshrined capitalist market economy as the dominant ideology in Europe. This flowed from Russian rapprochement with the west and its move towards adopting capitalist economics as a framework rather than the centralised Stalinist “command economy”. However, it also led to the unresolved problems of the European market in allowing a single currency without fiscal or banking union, let alone the political mechanisms for managing the continent’s economies. However, like all marriages, it began with hope, progress, and political advance, as the Soviet Union capitulated Stalinist communism and its hold over Eastern Europe, and the two Germanies were again united.

In exploring the wider systems framework that shapes the politics and economics of Europe, the creation and development of the European Union stands out as a hallmark series of events; in 2012 it received recognition for its notorious contribution towards peace when the Norwegian parliament awarded it a Nobel Peace Prize. It is commonly understood that the founding matrix (Foulkes, 1973) for the development of economic co-operation was born of the vision of creating trade to interpenetrate the European community with bonds of inter-dependency that would inoculate the continent against the appalling wars of the twentieth century.²⁰

For Angela Merkel, the newly minted plans for the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) could only succeed if there were a new European treaty that would create a legal political basis for the bailout. This in turn would provide one step towards the creation of European institutions—economic, military, and judicial—that would be closer to her ideal of political union in the EU.²¹ This is the core, espoused, and shared theory at the heart of the single currency project.

Economic leadership in Europe and its shortcomings

These high ideals to create the crossing of national borders with trade rather than armies had at its foundation a strongly socialist impetus under the leadership of French premier Jacques Delors and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Socialism aimed to empower the work-force through economic redistribution of wealth, to defend against the possible rebirth of fascism enabled by inflation. Economic principles have shifted to the right politically since then in the adoption, if not idealisation, of the free market, with its unimpeded movement of capital and labour and survival of only the fittest enterprises at the cost of national and local identities. Such ideals have always been in tension with the socialist purpose of the EU, providing not only capitalist values but socialist ones too, with strong welfare aspects to capitalism within mixed private and public sector economies. This balance has shifted radically over the past twenty years, the result of which can be seen in neo-liberal austerity measures, which now impose harsh economic demands with states in need of financial assistance.²²

In consequence, the pace of austerity measures is a sign of the need for a catch-up in a very short time-scale, at the cost of the

social fabric and dignity of southern European nations and burying the competitive advantage being secured by northern nations and their banks. Oscillation between initial lack of financial regulation and demanding conditions for bailout provides an example of what Hinshelwood described as lax containment oscillating with rigid containment (Hinshelwood, 1987; Hopper, 2012; Morgan-Jones, 2010a).²³

Response to these policies of investment in the infrastructure of national economies in southern and eastern Europe have not been without problems. The introduction of the euro as a common currency initially provided a dreamed-for access to markets and wealth across member states through low interest rates freeing-up trade. Yet low interest rates have encouraged borrowing by states way beyond the capacity of their economies to repay them. In consequence the past two years have seen a rash of summit meetings of EU leaders working fiercely to produce agreements. However, all attempts at bailouts have been compromised. Leading governments have repeatedly sought to offer financial rescue with conditions, while participating nations have then undermined the very economic agreements they had arrived at, resorting instead to economic competition and national self-interest.²⁴

So why have bailout attempts been pursued so apparently single-mindedly when there are such strong arguments against them? It is tempting to draw upon the arguments from the first hypothesis outlined above and to suggest that there are strong collective emotions at work here. We could point to the humiliation and shame not just of Germany but of all the other countries traumatised by invasion, internal splitting between collaborators and resistance movements, as well as the struggle against dictatorships in the Spanish and Greek civil wars. However much this first hypothesis is persuasive there is also a current context to face in the demise of the nation state and the search for austerity measures to make up for lack of mechanisms for economic convergence in Europe.

Despite the overt purpose and fight to carry on the co-operative ideals of the Euro, in practice the nation states have very often undermined them, not least through economic warfare and competitiveness. In a study earlier this year (2012) Carlos Bastasin²⁵ argues that it is nationalist interests that have repeatedly caused the near total breakdown of the eurozone currency in the face of the desperate need for international co-operation. In September 2008, May 2010, and November 2011, somehow, despite national interests, “existential reasons for the

euro area have proved stronger than the weaknesses of the ship and the clumsiness of command" (Bastasin, 2012).

Bastasin describes the

European Union as ... the world's most advanced attempt to form a human community among different peoples through supranational co-operation and acknowledgement of common destiny. If the European experiment fails, the world will see national interests resurge in a time when global issues have become vital and cannot be solved by any single nation". (2012)

He suggests that two partisan hypotheses have been given to explain the crisis. One narrative "blames German and French banks for reckless investments, while the second blames the stubborn profligacy, private indebtedness, low efficiency and political backwardness of peripheral countries" (2012).

These two hypotheses outline the sado-masochistic role-lock in which north and south European nations are entwined. Bastasin suggests that a deeper explanation can be found in the short-sighted attempts by national governments to seek competitive advantage, thereby waging economic war while ignoring the need for building trusted containers for the conflicting parties through political negotiation.²⁶

Conclusion

The first hypothesis suggests that the humiliation trauma of wars in the twentieth century continue to undermine attempts to create a work group that would transcend national interests and contain the current crisis. In other words, its collective dynamics attack the foundation matrix of the European Union that espouses the view that economic trade crossing boundaries obliterates warfare. However, this vision for Europe does not deal with aggression and the humiliating dynamics of economic competition between nations, each of which has the capacity to undermine wider community decisions. This is evident in the failure to create institutions within the EU that would manage conflicts about economic strategy and co-ordinate effective fiscal policies and the political framework needed.

In consequence, European citizens have been left vulnerable, at the mercy of a particular form of containment, which has alternated

between being lax, on the one hand and, on the other, having a new desire for containment that is rigid and austere.²⁷ It is a recipe for sado-masochistic perverseness as well as driving mad the vulnerable to whom it exports humiliation trauma (Hinshelwood, 1987; Searles, 1959).

Psychoanalysis has long held the view that development involves the relinquishing of narcissistic and grandiose phantasy and its replacement with ordinary human realities, limitations, and facts of life. Loss and mourning for the past has to be accomplished before change can be accepted. This involves the ordinary experience of being humbled. Herein lie the social and emotional challenges facing Europe and its leadership for future generations. It is, perhaps, these dynamics that risk getting under the skin of organisational life as they are exported from a political leadership which is failing to provide for their containment. This is what the Occupy movement protests about; the irrelevance of political systems that ignore the experience of citizens, other than to burden and blame them.

The second hypothesis suggests that the transition from the grandeur of imperial nation states into market states with less and less control over their destiny, ideology, population, boundaries, and economies, necessitates a humbling experience where ambition—to be more powerful or wealthy than others—can no longer have a place within the dynamics of international economic cooperation. Austerity measures are a psychotic defence against and retreat from being humbled.

But what is the future for Europe? Some commentators have observed how, while the European leadership has gone for austerity measures, the USA has paced the paying off of national debt until the economy can begin to grow. There are increasing calls in Europe for such an approach.

Among future scenarios is the possibility that the eurozone could fail and nations retreat to their own currencies. Even if some nations were to retain the euro, if managed well, there could be an orderly return to the protective device of devaluation to restimulate vulnerable economies until they can recover their own competitiveness.

Beyond these options there is a need to address how the nations identify common causes so as to protect all citizens from further humiliation trauma, not least by paying attention to what the citizens of Europe are seeking to express through new political movements.

This paper began from awareness of the ways austerity measures and their emotional dynamics intrude under the skin of organisations. This

raises understanding of organisations that repeat humiliation trauma without realising it. By recreating an organisational skin within which creative work can proceed, humiliation within work relations may be prevented from spoiling collaboration.

To “recover” from economic and emotional trauma does not just signify growth. It also signifies providing a safe covering within which development can be facilitated. Such insights may contribute to shaping a process where they can work through their social and political implications to citizens.

Without careful boundary negotiation there is a risk that such insights can re-traumatise people in the face of deeper emotions being stirred up but not processed. The skill of providing such boundaried work belongs to the essence of the authority, skill, and experience of the group relations and systems psychoanalytic world from which these insights derive.

In other words, the potency in systems psychoanalytic work is in devising inter-personal processes through which people can be humbled without being humiliated. The eurozone is such a system-in-the-mind, with which to be engaged.

Notes

1. See Morgan-Jones 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, Morgan-Jones and Torres 2010.
2. Conducted in 26 countries across the world in January 2012.
3. Its enquiry belongs firmly in the tradition of OPUS, whose founding vision was exemplified in Eric Miller and Olya Khaleelee’s ground breaking paper (1985) on the possibilities of treating society as a large group whose dynamics could be explored.
4. For a discussion of the Specialist work group task of financial services, see: “Financial bodies called to account: Corporate risks of carrying fear and greed on behalf of the body politic”. (Dixon & Morgan-Jones 2010, see also Morgan-Jones, 2011a).
5. National Institute of Economic and Social Research (London) reported by Portes, London Guardian 31 October 2012.
6. Their supporters include politicians and economists and carry titles such as “Austerity is not enough! We need a Federal Europe, United and Democratic”; “Save the Greeks from their Saviours”; “Has Europe lost its soul to the markets?”
7. Such groupings include the international Occupy movements and the Indignados in Spain that, among others, have developed the use of

internet blogs, Twitter, and Facebook to further their communication of dialogue, message, and event.

8. In responding to him, I outlined a socio-psychoanalytic view of such perversions proposing that he read Bukhard Sievers' and Susan Long's pioneering collection, *Towards a Socioanalysis of Mmoney, Finance, and Capitalism: Beneath the Surface of the Financial Industry* (2011). He kindly appreciated my comments and said he would read the book.
9. Peter Preston's new study (2012) of the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War describes the political slaughter of opponents of fascism as a "Holocaust".
10. The 2010 symposium of the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organisations presented a challenging title: "The Angel of History and the Ghost of the Future—Psychodynamics and Organisational Change." I am grateful to Stein Visholm and his Danish team who invented the vision for this Copenhagen Conference.
11. Quote by a parliamentary deputy (Tremlett, 2010).
12. I came across this phenomenon in the early 70s working at Coventry Cathedral which had forged close links with cities in Germany that had been fire-stormed by bombing, as had Coventry. Visiting groups of German students would ask the challenging question: "Do the British people still blame Germans for having started the war?" This led on to the thorny issue of how they dealt with their own feelings and views about their parents' generation. Were they, too, responsible and guilty for having colluded with Hitler's war effort?
13. Author of the haunting book, now a film, *The Reader*, exploring the buried tragedy of Nazi perpetrators of violence and their victims.
14. Firms such as Bosch, Bayer, BMW, Volkswagen, and Mercedes.
15. This includes exporting 25% of its arms production to Greece.
16. Such conditional targets are the by-products of policies and external events. To set them as aims when they can only be consequences is to invite manipulation of figures in order to find acceptance.
17. Andrzej Leder gives a vivid description of the current state of Warsaw as a city described as a patient suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (Leder, 2011). (See also Chapter Ten.)
18. In his analysis of Berlusconi's Italy, Viroli (2012) describes his citizens as carrying the liberty only of servants in a court system like "his courtiers—who depend on him to gain and preserve wealth, status and reputation."
19. I am particularly grateful to Philip Boxer for his inspired work and in pointing me to this source.
20. See Budd & Jones, 1991, pp. 22–23.

21. "The idea of European Unity is the most captivating, most wonderful, most promising idea that Europe has ever seen ... The twenty-first century can become Europe's century". Merkel's speech at Charlemagne prize honouring Polish premier Donald Tusk for his leadership against the communist regime. Bastian translated in Bastian 2012.
22. In a sense, the 2008 banking bailout was a betrayal of neo-liberal free market principles in order to provide an EU-wide common market that is sustainable. It is as if, at last, there had been a realisation that Europe did not have the fiscal and political power in its institutions to engineer convergence.
23. These swings have provoked extreme dynamics between the traumatised wings of the group dynamics of me-ness or aggregation alternating with the terrors of fission producing one-ness and massification (Hopper, 2012; Lawrence, 2000; Morgan-Jones, 2010a; Turquet, 1974, 1975).
24. Bastasin (2012) traces this history in detail.
25. Of the US Brookings Institute.
26. In systems psychoanalytic terms we might see this relationship between the austere nations and the profligate ones as parasitic in Bion's sense of a relationship where both parties depend upon each other, that risks destroying both as they devour each other's legitimacy (Bion, 1988).
27. While the 2008 economic crisis focused the need for tighter controls on credit and the excesses of unregulated investment banking, austerity measures have focused attacks on the vulnerable and the social fabric, rather than on the financial institutions that created the crisis.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

The power of symbols, vulnerability of trust, and securitisation

Andrzej Leder

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the “state of emergency” in which we live is the rule. We must arrive at a concept of history which corresponds to this.

Walter Benjamin

Is psychology really a “soft factor”?

The crisis sweeping over the global economy has made numerous analysts question to what extent and how human psychology influences economic processes. That it influences economic processes seems beyond doubt. This influence is mostly regarded, however, as some kind of extra factor, a humanistic touch somewhat “softening” the tough and unchangeable laws of mechanical economics. Let us take optimism, for example. Determining the scale of consumer optimism, or, to use the language of evangelical virtues, of consumer hope, has become a routine instrument for researching economic trends. However, this hope is viewed as a dependent variable, conditional, among other determinants, on the unemployment rate; essentially easy to research, but not a basic variable.

But these things psychology tells us about are by no means soft or delicate. Even less could they be described as an extra factor. Individual human behaviours driven by fundamental emotions add up, making great waves and currents that determine the course of economic developments. They sometimes elevate and sometimes undermine the power of organisations, corporations, or even states. This is the kind of situation we have experienced recently and we continue to remain in its grip.

The crisis we are still experiencing has on many occasions been described as a crisis of trust. Does this statement simply mean that several greedy bankers have abused the trust of millions of people who have entrusted them with their savings? No. Such a line of reasoning would indicate precisely such a “patronising” attitude towards the psychological determinants of the economy. For what this statement communicates is something like: if these bankers had played their role correctly, nothing wrong would have happened. But man is weak and liable to sin, and since the bankers have sinned, the mechanism has jammed ...

But it is not all that simple. I wish to argue here that the most recent “crisis of trust” is all about a completely different role that trust plays and means in the economy.

The power and vulnerability of trust

What does it take to entrust somebody else with something of value to you? You need to trust them. And what does it take to entrust somebody with something the loss of which would be irreversible, with the fruits of your entire lifetime? You would need to put deep trust in that person. And what if what is actually at stake are not the fruits of a single lifetime, but rather the fruits of the efforts of an entire generation? If what is at stake are years and decades of the labours of millions of people, converted into assets? What is the condition that has to be met to entrust that someone with something of such a great value? Even deeper trust, it would seem at the first glance. However, it is not that simple. For it is often the case that trust is not a matter of choice but a question of necessity; that it is the trust of someone cornered, of someone terrified, acting under the pressure of mortal danger.

Our thinking tends towards a simple extrapolation: as the value of the entrusted good increases, so must also increase the voluntarily

offered trust. The bottom line is this: if we had no trust, we would not entrust that good to anyone but rather we would keep it in some chest of drawers. This is not the case, however; the burden of certain goods, too precious to remain in our hands, lies heavily upon us; we are forced to entrust them to others. This seems to be a crucial element of our reflection on trust.

In the cheerful past, before the crisis, theoreticians too often assumed that there was only one basic model of a situation of trust. According to this model, trust is a gift that may simply be given or withheld. The one giving his trust is, in a fundamental sense, free in the face of this choice. There are limitations related to cultural tradition, or to the history of the given subject, but they impose restrictions on something that by its very nature is free will: to trust or not to trust. Obviously, if we are more generous with our trust, we gain numerous advantages, whether of an economic or social nature. If, on the other hand, we limit our trustfulness, the worst that may happen to us is losing those benefits: we will be peacefully stuck in our backwater of distrust, and that's it.

This vision is based on a very peculiar and quite carefree anthropology. Man, a subject, simply is there. And how much trust he, or she, puts in another person, does not have much impact on that "is there". But it sometimes happens to be quite the reverse. Sometimes man's very existence, his life, hangs on nothing more than a thread of trust. Sometimes the subject knows that either he entrusts himself to another person, or else everything he has, including his very existence, disappears. Sometimes he is cornered, looking with terrified eyes for someone to receive the burden of his life.

As a matter of fact I believe this is usually the case. This is, after all, what psychoanalysis teaches us. Going back in time, it is an anthropology anticipated by Hobbes when he believed that we trusted the ruler out of fear for our lives. This is, finally, the "state of emergency" mentioned by Benjamin (1968). This is usually the case and that was naturally also the case during that cheerful decade closing the previous century, even if it seemed to some that things were different then.

Trust and necessity in political economy

A cheerful decade indeed ... As early as ten years ago it was known that America was borrowing too much from the rest of the world. The more inquisitive economists described the mechanism of large

credit that allowed the American economy to live beyond its means for years. Also, it allowed Europe, spoilt by America, to do the same. Today, when the financial crisis “bigger than that of the 1930s” has devoured these illusions, and, with it, also the sense of prosperity and security, this observation has become trivial. Which does not mean, however, that it has been given its proper consideration. The connection between the then prevalent blind compulsion to borrow and the “crisis of trust” still calls for relevant exploration and explanation. For let us repeat: in the developments that we have been involuntary witness to for as long as several years now, the crisis of trust appears to be the central moment. The lack of mutual trust between economic players undermined their readiness to extend loans to one another. The lack of trust in European leaders’ political power and determination raises the interest rates countries have to pay for loans. And so on, and so forth ...

But why, actually, did everybody extend loans to America? Because they trusted the USA. This is one side to the coin. Let us, however, introduce the above-mentioned problem of compulsion of trust into the present discussion. The issue of necessity, of a lack of choice, of the force that increased the potential readiness to “trust” one hundredfold, will help to shed some light on the other, hidden side of our problem.

As we know, China produces everything. Production goes on in thousands of factories, where masses of workhorses continue to toil in semi-slavery. What propagates this and makes it possible, among other things, is the fact that the Chinese countryside is a reservoir of illegal individuals, born without permission, and thus practically deprived of any civil rights whatsoever. It is common knowledge that a Chinese family must seek permission to bear a child. If there is any surplus progeny, formally it does not exist. Consequently, in this society of one billion, forced by poverty and the political regime to undertake disproportionate economic effort, there is a huge subclass whose labour is to be had almost for nothing. However, the fruits of that labour—toys, children’s clothing, gadgets—are sold across the world for real money. Not too much money—for every parent knows that cuddly toys made in China are cheap—but the money is still very real. A steady stream of that money keeps flowing to the decision-makers of the Chinese economy. But the absorption capacity of these means to benefit the people of China is limited. Therefore, a mountain of dollars keeps growing all the time.

This mechanism is in evidence not only in China but in all the rapidly developing former "Third World" countries, chasing after prosperity that is growing ever more distant and unachievable. The mountains of money growing in fossil fuel-exporting countries, such as Russia or Saudi Arabia, were terrifying, casting a shadow on political decision-makers wielding economic power. These mountains of money force the question: what is to be done with this?

Money cannot simply lie still. Money is all about circulation, movement and potential; if halted, it becomes a nothingness sucking in those that handle it. Thesaurisation—converting money into some precious metals and storing them in hidden treasuries—was good in the feudal era. Today, surpluses must be invested. That is why the accumulated fruits of the work of millions of people, converted into money—billions or thousands of millions—are too heavy, too overwhelming for those who decide about them. Or perhaps one should use a different metaphor here: these accrued amounts of money make their fingers burn.

Chinese rulers, and all those in similar position to them, are therefore facing a choice of what to do with this finger-burning treasure and specifically struggle to answer a burning question: where to invest these mountains of money? Let us repeat again that this is not a free choice of either I invest or I do not ... This is a situation of absolute compulsion, where a high official responsible for these billions, and all those subordinate to him, are trembling at the thought of a gaze thrown by a Politburo secretary or a sheikh and the question that will inevitably follow: "Comrades, brothers, and what has to be done about our export surpluses?" They are also trembling at the prospect of giving the wrong answer to this question and at the implications for their own position at the hands of their rivals who are sharpening their teeth.

So what can they possibly do with that mountain of money? They can build new factories, roads, dams, and high-rise buildings ... And, naturally, that is what they are doing, but all of that is not enough. The capital absorption capacity of the local economy is too weak, and the heap of dollars keeps growing faster than it can be spent. They could raise wages. But this would mean shooting oneself in the foot: after all, the whole machinery is based on the fact that the Chinese worker labours almost for free ... No, such a demand might be put forward by, pardon the expression, communists.

Be it as it may, in China there was nowhere to reduce the growing mountains of money. It was the same in Russia, when petroleum was

selling for one hundred and several dozen dollars per barrel, and it was the same in Saudi Arabia ...

Fortunately, there was America!

We come back here to the matter of trust. The hapless Chinese, Russian, and Saudi decision-makers in charge of massive heaps of money had to entrust them to somebody. For how many solid-gold toilet bowls, jets, and limousines, how much caviar and how many female slaves can one buy? All that is not enough, the heaps keep growing and something had to be done about it!

Who is it that a Chinese bank manager, a Russian official from the "power ministries", or a Saudi prince will put his trust in? In his colleague? A comrade from the services? A half-brother from a different mother? No! They will trust the one who says: "I'll take it!" Just like that. In order to win their trust it is enough to responsibly say: "I'm taking it!"

Contrary to appearances, few will take thousands of billions of dollars with the awareness that they will have to be paid back. Anyone who watches gangster movies knows that it is dangerous to take a case full of money. That it is a misfortune. A curse.

The Chinese decision-maker in charge of billions of dollars welcomes a US issuer of bonds who says: "I'm taking it all and I will pay you back with interest." That issuer is the only one to turn up. He saves the decision-maker from trouble, so a "power ministry" official drinks the best frozen vodka with him, a desert prince invites him to a hunting party with falcons, and a Chinese oligarch hosts a sumptuous dinner of 768 dishes in his honour. They love him because he frees them from that ghastly heap of money.

And yet at the same time they hate him. They hate him as the Han people hated the "foreign devils", as the people of the Ummah hated an infidel, and as the heirs of Byzantium hated Latin-rite Christians.

Paradoxically, trust in America rests on a blend of fascination, aversion, envy, and helplessness. For who deserves to be trusted? Where force rules, it is the one whom I am unable to destroy. The Chinese knew how fragile "the Russky" was. "The Russky" knew that Chinese regime might fall any moment. Everybody was aware that Islamic regimes and kingdoms were becoming powder kegs. And yet this blasted America seemed indestructible. Consequently, the mountains of money could be entrusted only to the USA.

Three methodological observations

Let's return to the issue of trust. Let me start by describing three observations of a methodological nature. Firstly, the naive anthropology I have written about views trust as a fairly simple phenomenon, similar to that investigated by the natural sciences. This positivist tradition ignores the complex and heterogeneous character of the phenomenon that we call trust, and, most importantly, overlooks its radically non-spontaneous nature, its being embedded in a network of relationships that connect trust to other phenomena of the soul, both individual and social: to the phenomena that are in fact human relations, such as aversion, hatred, fear, and desire for recognition ... Trust does not exist without all these relations; it is impossible to grasp without attempting to grasp an important fragment of that network. Additionally, this network keeps evolving and changing over time, taking on a historical dimension. Obviously, one may write about "isolated" trust while preserving the standards of methodological correctness, but a description of this kind ignores the fundamental, complex truth about man and the world, which makes it shallow and boring as anything that is forced into a format of "correctness".

Second, one needs to note that this forced trust we are talking about is trust put in representations. In signifiers, *signifiants*, as Lacanians say. This becomes quite clear when we remind ourselves about the construct on which to model our argument, that is, about the trust that the subjects place, *volens nolens*, in their sovereign, in Hobbes's writings. He is epitomised by the Leviathan. Its very name indicates a creature moving on the border between reality and imagination. America in the 1990s represented a similar case. American banks, Chase Manhattan, Salomon or Lehman Brothers and Citi, its military power, fleets numbered from one to ten and fighting jets starting with the letter F, its cities with their skyscrapers: the World Trade Center and Sears Tower, its computers and tele-discs, and films, films, films that told people across the world about all these things. These were the symbols breeding a sense of security at that time. Universally recognisable, universal, and apparently indestructible precisely for that very reason.

Whoever was forced to entrust somebody else with their own great resources, whoever was looking for a trustee, used to turn precisely towards those very symbols. Rather than trust a neighbour or a stranger, he entrusted whatever he had to those carriers of symbols of certainty.

For, contrary to naive anthropology, trust is not simply trust placed in people, but rather trust put in symbols and signs standing for that aspect of humanity which is connected with duration in time, with certainty and invariability. Jacques Lacan defines it brilliantly, writing that the subject is always only represented by the signifiant vis-à-vis another signifiant (1966, p. 819).

Consequently, we have to adopt a revised anthropology: the American issuer of bonds who used to sell them to Chinese or Arab decision-makers, allowing them to get rid of mountains of money, was actually not treated as a human being. To them, he was nothing but a symbol of a stable institutional order, which represented “almost an eternity” to their own terrified imaginations. A micro-Leviathan, so to speak. On the scale of the phenomena we are discussing here—a scale infinitely exceeding the capacity of a single individual—forced trust may only concern signs and symbols. And naturally, because of that, they acquire a great value, as well as great power.

And so, third, any descriptions of trust lacking that political context conceal the fact that trust is today a fundamental factor in determining the balance of power in the globalised world. What is needed in order to operate in this world are complex, multi-storey trust systems, ultimately meaning nothing other than confidence in representations, in *signifiants*, in symbols.

This is one of the elements of the western power that is overwhelming the rest of the world. Europe, which has only limited military power at its disposal, operates by virtue of the power derived from trust universally placed in its symbols: starting with the Mercedes, through British Queen Elizabeth II, French cognacs and the Loire Valley castles, to the Hague Tribunal and the Scandinavian social model. Trust is therefore, at the same time, an element of the symbolic power that still allows the West to benefit, ostensibly in clear conscience, from the slave labour of millions of “third world” workers.

To sum up, descriptions attempting to isolate, in an apparently methodologically correct manner, any human phenomenon from the totality of contexts described in large-scale political, historical, and philosophical projects, inevitably become boring and therefore false. The implication “boring and therefore false” is not an oversimplification. Boredom is a distinguishing feature of shallowness, and shallow knowledge disguises that which is essential. Thus it ultimately falsifies reality.

The compulsion to lend money

It would seem that once the “hot potato” of the billions burning the fingers of decision-makers in various poor countries has been transferred into the hands of American bond issuers, the problem ceases to be so urgent. But even in the hands of a Wall Street shark that “hot potato” remains hot. It has to be planted on somebody else, meaning that the huge amounts of money, now deposited in the accounts of US financial institutions, need to be lent to somebody. But to whom? The best choice is to those to whom one has always lent. To the citizens. Mostly to US citizens and to citizens of other western countries. One needs to persuade millions of people to take out loans; to build houses, to buy cars and clothes, to educate themselves, to enjoy themselves ... Hence, while Zygmunt Bauman says that the crisis had its source in the deregulation of the credit policy allowed by neoliberal governments twenty to thirty years ago and in letting loose the human desire to have fun, and Leszek Balcerowicz mentions excessively low interest rates applied by the US federal reserve, one needs to add a third element here, an element that is in fact the precondition of the two aforementioned ones. This third element is precisely the terrifying pressure exerted by the huge mountains of money which, squeezed out of the drudgery and the lands of the rest of the world, had to be dispersed somewhere.

Incidentally, there is something disquieting in the biased focus of these otherwise insightful analysts on the realities of our own civilisation. As if it existed in isolation, unconnected to the rest of the world. This blindness is disquieting but, most importantly, it is symptomatic, in the Lacanian sense, where the lack, the deficiency is often the most significant.

Let us return to the big money. It was invested in raising western living standards. These standards were rising, thanks to the fruits of labour of millions of the poor: the Chinese, Hindus, and Malays, being entrusted with the symbols of trust created by America. The fruits of that labour made it possible to disregard banking safety regulations, credit pricing rules, etc. An average American took out a mortgage and bought a big house. The house was built by an American businessman, giving jobs to US workers (as well as to immigrants). Then the house had to be equipped: a German dishwasher, a Japanese car for the nanny to drive the kids to school ... The West as a whole was working and growing rich thanks to that money squeezed out of people and land,

the money that was burning the fingers of Chinese, Russian, or Saudi decision-makers.

Obviously, a mortgage ought to be paid off. Twenty or thirty years later that individual should have paid off his suburban home, a home that he thought he could afford. This was what the bank employee assessing his credit capacity assured him of. The problem is that at least some of the bank employees knew that it was not about the borrowers' own capacity to produce wealth, but rather about getting rid of the bits of the "hot potato". Actually, the bank employee assessed nothing, he was acting under the pressure of the vision of those mountains that might come crumbling down on him. "You have to extend loans!!!", the bosses told lesser bosses, and those told the same to even lesser ones, all the way down to the mortgage advisors who told the same thing to average people in Cleveland. And elsewhere.

Thus, they were aware that the citizens would not pay off their loans, but still made their employees sell them to their clients. Acting under great pressure, they took the money-lending risk, aware that the money would probably never be paid back. Why? Contrary to what might appear, the situation of executives and presidents of big western financial institutions is not so very different from the situation of the decision-makers in the developing, dictatorial countries. While they do not face the threat of being shot in the head or subjected to torture, they do face the risk of falling out of grace with the shareholders, being sidetracked in their careers, being evicted overnight from a luxury office into the street ... or even worse! All of this could happen to those who were unable to deliver appropriate returns from the mountains of dollars with which they had been entrusted. That is why, for the past twenty years, bankers have dissociated themselves from the debtors hurrying to pay off their loans. They have dissociated themselves from them because they have had to invest money.

And how do we know that they knew? First, bankers are not stupid. Second, bankers had come up with an idea of selling the credit risk and this is evidence that makes one think they knew what was coming. Selling the credit risk was the strategy to dodge the oncoming blow. It is rational to think that if someone has created such a strategy, he must have also been aware of the impending disaster. Bankers sold the risk, not only to those for whom the mountains of money kept growing, not only to the Chinese and the Russians, but also to the financial institutions of old Europe.

Subprimes, or how to export the risk

Here is where we arrive at the fascinating subject of securitisation. The first person to use this term was, allegedly, a Salomon Brothers employee in a 1977 interview. So what is securitisation? Economists claim that, in its best version, it is selling part of the profits, but together with the whole risk involved in gaining them, to other players. If a banker extends a loan, he runs the risk that the borrower will not pay it off: so, he can sell to a third party, for ready money, a promise that if the borrower pays off his debt, he will share his profit with that third party. If, on the other hand, the borrower suddenly ceases to pay off his loan, the money is lost. Thus the banker almost completely eliminates his own risk. On selling the promise he already has the money, and now it is the third party that bears the risk. As long as the borrowing Cleveland resident was paying off his loan together with interest, the banker got profits from the lent capital. When it turned out that the borrower would not pay off his loan, the banker gained profit from the money he had got from selling the promise. And the loser was the one who had bought the promise together with the risk from the banker.

And that was precisely what happened, on a massive scale, in 2008.

That third party, buying fractions of potential profits, together with almost the entire risk, was virtually the whole world—apart from America—and, in particular, European financial institutions which, keeping huge amounts of money from the retirement funds of their ageing citizens in their accounts, were eager to buy promises from American banks, such as Salomon Brothers, or Lehman Brothers of infamous memory. For decades, Europeans trustfully entrusted a sizeable portion of their earnings to big banks and their retirement institutions. And the latter used to buy securities based on US mortgage loans, together with the risk of those loans not being paid off. Obviously, the aforementioned Chinese, Russian, or Saudi decision-makers in charge of wealth management were buying those promises with their eyes closed. For this allowed them to get rid of the money that was continually burning their fingers.

And, once again, they were buying US securities, first, because the Americans, and no others, were offering them and, second, because everybody was saying: “Well, whoever goes bankrupt, it will certainly not be Lehman Brothers!” They had put their trust in the strength and durability of the American symbols of financial order. They trusted that

even if something went wrong, the US political government would not allow the institutions which were the vehicle of that symbolic certainty to become insolvent. In that not-too-distant era, trust was an enormously powerful force whose momentum was inversely proportional to the vulnerability and limitations that we see today in those institutions.

Moreover, at that time, financiers were saying that risk-free financial operations were possible. Risk-free for whom, may we ask? Risk-free for them. With a real, but reduced risk for westerners, citizens of Cleveland, Reykjavik, or Cork. And with a greater risk passed on to those several billion residents of poor countries who live in poverty anyway. So, in a sense, as the thinking goes, it makes no difference to them. Whatever the declared intentions of the architects of instruments of this kind, securitisation was transferring the risk from the rich to the poor.

And this was precisely how it worked.

Predictably, the Cleveland resident stopped paying off his loan. Some banks, such as Lehman Brothers, went bankrupt. The US government allowed that to happen. Everyone started suspecting that other players did not have heaps of money any more, that they had spent it on houses, cars, clothes, and electronic toys bought by western consumers. Even if other banks received government assistance, tantamount to printing empty money, everything started losing value anyway. The promises, once bought together with the risk involved, turned out to be empty. As the American borrowers had stopped paying off their loans, the money for which Europeans, Russians, Chinese, and everybody else had been buying the risk—while thinking that actually there was no risk involved—was lost. In accordance with securitisation agreements the inhuman toil of Third World residents had financed a dozen or so years of prosperity for America and other western countries. For this is where the goods, built and bought during the prosperity era and, last but not least, the sweet memories of the decade of unbridled consumption, have remained.

Carpe diem—or on the rationality of irrational behaviours

All right, but how could the American bankers, who knew that the residents of Cleveland and many other cities were unable to pay off their loans, possibly take this kind of risk? They must have known that, they could not have been unaware!

A blinding desire for profit, immorality, and shamelessness are often spoken about. As well as rampant consumerism ... and various similar other things. Moralising is being practised in economics, and yet the amoral nature of political economics is being forgotten. It seems to be as naïve, in the worst sense of the word, as it is superficial in its naivety. And shallow.

Yes, we can assume that the US financiers most probably knew what they were doing. But they did not have too much choice. They had to lend the money that was overflowing from their safes. And so they flogged loans to those who were obviously incapable of paying them off, and subsequently sold the risk to those who had to get rid of mountains of money, squeezed out of the slave labour of people and brutal exploitation of land ... The financiers were selling the risk so as to flog the billions they had gained in the form of loans once again. And so *da capo* ...

What were they hoping for? Perhaps they were hoping that the system founded on illusory trust could not fail after all. That the working of that illusion would be enough to uphold the circulation indefinitely. This would mean that they had let themselves be deluded by the power of trust in their own symbols. They really had come to believe that, come what may, their own American banks could not collapse. As in Pascal's reflection, they had repeated a certain ritual for so long that they had imparted an independent existence to the contents of that ritual. This would mean, however, that they had allowed critical reason to capitulate, that they had stopped thinking and merely kept performing mechanical gestures. Even the collapse of the World Trade Center in a sea of fire, the most symbolic event possible, was not enough of a warning for them.

Many might have stopped thinking. But not all. Some were perfectly well aware of what was going on. They were aware that at some point this treadmill would jam, if only because of the fact that one day the Cleveland resident would stop paying off his loan. But this was not yet the day. On that day, the interest was still flowing in, meaning that one could go on buying, selling, lending, securitising, and that one could drive back home in a big Land Cruiser in the evening. This was not today yet, and that gave one another twenty-four hours, a day and a night stolen away from the certainty that the horror had to come. The "state of emergency", in which one lives from day to day, does not, after all, concern the oppressed only: today's "Muselmans" and

“dokhodyagi”—as the emaciated and devitalised concentration camp and Gulag inmates on the brink of death were known—workhorses, immigrants. Giorgio Agamben (1998) aptly expands Benjamin’s field of thinking: at the other extreme of the spectrum of human fate, the state of emergency concerns the makers of rules, today’s sovereigns sitting in their great office towers of Manhattan, Shanghai, and the City of London. Agamben’s association of this world with the realities of a camp, a world in which the only rule is to survive yet another day, is not coincidental. Those who were slightly more insightful were aware that neither laws nor symbols can save anybody from collapse.

Those most astute knew, however, that when everything suddenly collapsed, nothing would actually change. They realised that that illusory, inflated balloon had to burst, but at the same time they guessed that ultimately they would not be the ones to bear the consequences of that disaster. And this is precisely what we are experiencing. When Chantal Mouffe, an icon of the Left, says that capitalism will emerge out of the crisis strengthened because the Left has no alternative project except capitalism, she gets to the crux of the matter.

The certainty that nothing would change follows from the fact that a big crisis means either-or. There are only two ways out of it. A crisis may lead to war and a profound change in the political balance of power, and ultimately also to a change in symbolic power relations in the world. This is what the 1930s crisis, and all the misfortunes that followed in its wake, led to. Alternatively, it may happen that war does not break out, and the political hegemonic leader transfers the costs of the crisis onto the poor, retaining his own symbolic power. And this is what is happening today. Despite all the cursing and shoe-throwing, despite the great economic growth of the “emerging powers”, the USA and the West as a whole are, at least for the time being, powerful enough: politically, militarily, and symbolically.

Or rather, one might say, all the others are too weak for the balance of power to shift significantly. The West is symbolically powerful, because one cannot trust anybody else and, again, we are in a Hobbesian situation! It is precisely this feeling that there is nobody else to be trusted that made the world excuse America so quickly for having had Bush and throw itself into Baracomania. No matter how strongly the USA may be hated, its power rests in the belief that all the others are worse. Osama bin Laden’s followers may think differently, but who would really trust them? And so ultimately the poor, who are destitute anyway, become

even poorer. Those moderately well-off are becoming slightly poorer. And the rich? All the fun they have had: nobody can take that away from them!

For many years, we in the West used to benefit from the fact that the financiers were doing whatever they were doing, and it would be hypocritical to pretend that it does not concern us. The costs that we have had to pay have, until now, not been excessively exorbitant. These costs are the greater the higher was the degree of the blind moral comfort, of the ostensible ignorance of where the rapidly growing prosperity of that era was coming from. That is why the Europeans, masters of hypocrisy and cynicism, in Sloterdijks' sense, will ultimately pay a much higher price compared to the Americans.

And that is also why it is deeply rational that banks going bankrupt, and salvaged with taxpayers' money, have paid bonuses of millions of euros, pounds, or dollars to their executives. For they were doing the right thing selling the risk of an inevitable disaster. Any other course of action would have been irrational. And the Chinese secretaries, Russian "power ministry" officials, and Arab princes had no other option but to buy that risk, paying with the lives of their subjects and the resources of their lands. Any other course of action would not have been rational, either. And all that we, living somewhere in between, were able to do, was to close our eyes, trust that this was the way it had to be and buy these toys, gadgets, cars that were so cheap, so incredibly cheap ...

And this is the hard core of the psychological problem of trust in economics.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A culture of mania: a psychoanalytic view of the incubation of the 2008 credit crisis^{*,†}

Mark Stein

Abstract

In this theoretically informed study I explore the broader cultural changes that created the conditions for the credit crisis of 2008. Drawing on psychoanalysis and its application to organisational and social dynamics, I develop a theoretical framework around the notion of a manic culture, comprised of four aspects: denial; omnipotence; triumphalism; and over-activity. I then apply this to the credit crisis and argue that the events of 2008 were preceded by an incubation period lasting for over two decades during which a culture of mania developed. Then, focusing especially on the Japanese and South East Asia/LTCM crises, I argue that a series of major ruptures in capitalism during this incubation period served not as warnings, but as opportunities for a manic response, thereby dramatically increasing the risks involved. I also

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argue that this mania was triggered and strengthened by triumphant feelings in the West over the collapse of communism. I suggest therefore that this manic culture played a significant role in creating the conditions for the problems that led to the credit crisis.

Key words: credit crisis; culture; mania; psychoanalysis.

Introduction

The financial turmoil of 2008 constituted a crisis of significant proportions, the shock-waves of which we have yet fully to witness. The turmoil was not just an unprecedented crisis for our financial system, but represents, at a deeper level, a breakdown in our social foundations, our relationship with the financial system, the broader economy, and the state. It is sobering to be reminded that the financial crisis of 1929–1932 cast a long and dark shadow over the twentieth century, and, with this in mind, it is clear that the 2008 financial crisis should be taken very seriously indeed. Whatever tentative signs of recovery we may see, we should not be deluded into thinking that the problem is now—or will shortly be—over.

There is already a burgeoning literature on the credit crisis. Most authors stress the systemic inter-relation of factors that led up to the events of 2008, but also highlight issues they regard as especially pertinent. Jain (2009) explores the problem of poor regulation, while Arnold (2009), Hopwood (2009), McSweeney (2009), and Sikka (2009) examine the role of accounting and audit practices in the lead up to the crisis. Using somewhat different lenses, Klimecki and Willmott (2009) study the use of derivatives and bonds by institutions such as banks and hedge-funds, Morgan (2010) examines the role of credit default swaps in particular, while Tett (2009) focuses specifically on the innovation of these products at J. P. Morgan and their diffusion to other investment banks. In contrast to these accounts, Shiller argues that “[t]he housing bubble was a major cause, if not *the* cause, of the subprime crisis” (2008, p. 29, emphasis in original), while Krugman argues that the shadow banking system was at “the core of what happened” (2008, p. 163). Focusing on social and psychological factors, some authors emphasise the role of excessive hubris (Jain, 2009, p. 99) and greed (Tett, 2009) in creating the conditions that led up to the credit crisis. Taking wider political and economic views, yet other authors focus on the “broader

shifts in power" (Gamble, 2009, p. 42), the dangers of the "neo-liberal experiment" (Klimecki & Willmott, 2009, p. 121), and, in the British context, the insulation of financial markets from democratic politics (Froud, Moran, Nillson, & Williams, 2010), all of which shaped the political economy of capitalism in the decades prior to the credit crisis.

There can be little doubt that these authors and writers have made important contributions by opening up the debate on what led up to the dramatic events of 2008, and many key elements of the crisis have been illuminated in their writings. However, whether one examines the actions of banks and hedge funds, or the limitations of ratings agencies, auditors, regulators, and governments, a more worrying and deeper question emerges concerning why so many parties, more or less simultaneously, were implicated in such unprecedented and extreme risk-taking. While some—such as Klimecki and Willmott (2009), Gamble (2009), and Froud, Moran, Nillson, and Williams (2010)—have addressed this deeper level, this paper explores this level by developing an alternative perspective using the lens of psychoanalysis and its application to organisational and social dynamics.

In addressing this, I argue that the locus of this question should be established at the level of the profound changes in culture that occurred in capitalist society in which many parties—especially those in positions of political and financial leadership—colluded. I argue that this change in culture involved a two to three decade-long "incubation period"—the period during which the problems leading to a crisis develop and are known about, but not acted upon (Turner, 1976; Turner & Pidgeon, 1997)—and that during this incubation period governments and regulatory agencies abdicated their authority by facilitating excessive and reckless financial liberalisation; large financial institutions, hedge funds, pension funds, and investors engaged in unnecessary and highly dangerous risk-taking; and auditors and ratings agencies failed in their proper functioning. I suggest that underpinning this change was a manic culture that had developed during this period.

The sequence of this paper is as follows. After this introduction, and drawing on ideas from psychoanalysis and its application to social and organisational dynamics, I outline the theoretical framework of a manic culture. I suggest that a manic culture is one typified by denial, omnipotence, triumphalism, and over-activity. Following this, I argue that such a culture developed in western capitalism during the 1980s, 1990s, and the early part of the twenty-first century. I suggest that this

culture was most vividly manifest in a manic response to two major occurrences—(1) the Japanese and (2) South East Asia/LTCM financial crises—during the period that led up to the events of 2008. I argue that a manic response to these crises greatly exacerbated risk-taking and laid the foundations for the 2008 credit crisis. Posing the question of why this culture developed at this point in history, I then explore the role of the collapse of communism in triggering and strengthening the culture of mania and triumphalism in the capitalist West. This is followed by a conclusion.

Manic culture: a theoretical framework

This paper is informed by ideas from psychoanalysis and its application to social and organisational dynamics. While writings on social and organisational themes have long been part of the psychoanalytic literature, a substantial number of studies in these areas emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century, with authors such as de Board (1978), French and Vince (1999), and Gabriel (1999) applying these concepts to organisations, and Lasch (1979) and Badcock (1980) using them to examine wider cultural and social issues. Drawing on a variety of psychoanalytic concepts, authors in this field have depicted certain organisational and social dynamics as perverse (Long, 2008), psychotic (Sievers, 1999) and narcissistic (Lasch, 1979; Schwartz, 1990; Stein, 2003), or as characterised by defences against anxiety (Menzies, 1960; Fotaki, 2006) or envy (Stein, 2000). While it would be interesting to discuss the relative merits of these approaches, an examination of these matters—involving long-standing debates within psychoanalysis—lies beyond the scope of this paper.

It also should be noted that there have of course been critics of this kind of approach. One such criticism is that psychoanalytic concepts (whether used in relation to individuals, organisations, or societies) are not open to empirical validation and confirmation (Gelner, 1985; Eysenck and Wilson, 1973). The use of psychoanalytic concepts in relation to organisations has been specifically criticized by Jaques (1995), an early pioneer and former proponent of this approach, on the grounds that it is dysfunctional (Jaques, 1995). A further criticism is that there is “uncertainty about how to apply a psychoanalytic concept at the organization or group level without reification” (Brown, 1997, p. 649). I follow Brown (1997) in arguing that, in spite of these criticisms

and uncertainties, the use of psychoanalytic ideas can be helpful in extending our understanding of social and organisational phenomena.

A number of schools of thought have developed within the broader area of the application of psychoanalytic ideas to social and organisational issues, one of which follows the work of Lacan (Driver, 2009; Bohm & Batta, 2010; Contu, Driver, & Jones, 2010). Another school derives from the work of social scientists at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London (Menzies, 1960; Trist and Murray, 1990), a tradition sometimes known as “systems psychodynamics” (Gould, Stapley, & Stein, 2001). Drawing especially, although not exclusively, on the ideas of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1935; 1940), systems psychodynamics examines the way in which the emotional needs of individuals, groups, and societies shape the cultures, structures, and processes within a social system, and the way—in turn—in which these emotional needs are influenced by cultures, structures, and processes.

Drawing inspiration from the “systems psychodynamic” tradition, in this paper I apply Melanie Klein’s idea of individual mania (Klein, 1935; 1940; Rosenfeld, 1987) to the broader level of culture and to the organisations that operate within it. Although Klein’s ideas have been used extensively in relation to organisations and cultures, her concept of mania has not been used in this way before. I therefore, in this paper, develop the theoretical framework of a manic culture. Below I outline four key, related, aspects of mania, and extend these to describe four main features of a manic culture.

First, as Klein has argued in her writings on manic states in individuals, “mania is based on the mechanism of *denial*” (1935, p. 277, emphasis in original), and by this she meant principally the denial of one’s vulnerabilities and the problems that one may face. While the term “denial” usually suggests that warning signs are ignored or overlooked, denial—when associated with mania—is different because it suggests that such vulnerabilities and problems are indeed observed, noted, and reacted to, but not in a healthy way that protects the individual. Applying this to the level of culture, a manic culture is one in which leaders and members observe and note problems and vulnerabilities, but feel threatened by their observations because they imply the need to worry and register the warnings involved. Such a culture is therefore unable to use these observations in a healthy way and take the warnings seriously.

Second, according to the Kleinian view, a “*sense of omnipotence ... characterises mania*” (Klein, 1935, p. 277, emphasis in original), with

Klein arguing that the manic individuals are beset by feelings that they are all-powerful, and, at least at a conscious level, convinced of their invulnerability (Klein, 1935, p. 277; 1940, p. 349). Instead of taking appropriate heed of problems and vulnerabilities, people in manic states therefore feel them to be a challenge to their sense of omnipotence and thus are inclined to respond to them by needing to prove their superiority. In the case of a manic culture, crises and problems would similarly be experienced as a provocation and a challenge to the culture's belief in its omnipotence and invulnerability. As a consequence, precisely those areas in which the culture would appear most at risk are located and selected, and these risks are then increased in an omnipotent way, thereby considerably increasing the culture's vulnerability. Important in this is that, at least in part, such feelings of omnipotence may be repressed and therefore not available in the conscious minds of members and leaders of the culture. Members and leaders of the culture who undertake omnipotent activities may thus do so without having any conscious awareness of the underlying motivation of their actions or of the dynamics that influence them.

Related to the issue of omnipotence, a third feature of mania is triumphalism, with Klein emphasising "the importance of *triumph* ... as an element of the manic position" (Klein, 1940, p. 351, emphasis in original). While omnipotence refers to feelings that one is all-powerful and invulnerable, triumphalism is the need to be victorious, and demonstrate one's superiority over others. We may elaborate this in relation to cultures insofar as members of a manic culture have an excessive need to celebrate their triumph and demonstrate their superiority over others who are perceived to have failed, where these others may be different cultures, institutions, or individuals. While an ordinary sense of triumph concerns feelings of pleasure that members of a culture may have in relation to their successes, triumphalism is different because it suggests both an excessive feeling of exultation in members' successes, as well as feelings of denigration and contempt in relation to those who have been less successful. Thus, information about the failure of others is experienced by members of the culture as a provocation to behave in even more extreme ways. It may thus prompt members of the culture to take on extreme risks—specifically in the area of the failure of others—to demonstrate their own invulnerability and superiority. As with the related issue of omnipotence, triumphalism may be largely or partly unconscious, and therefore occurs when awareness of the above

motivations and dynamics of superiority and denigration are repressed and unavailable to the conscious minds of members of the culture.

Fourth, individuals in a manic state engage in over-activity in order to dispel any concerns about their risks and vulnerabilities (Klein, 1935, p. 277). While a healthy individual will engage in activities in a thoughtful and appropriate way, mania is a much more extreme state of mind that involves the inclination to be highly over-active. This manic over-activity functions to protect the person from feelings of vulnerability that things may go wrong and “often bears no relation to any actual results achieved” (Klein, 1935, p. 277). Extending this to cultures, awareness of problems and vulnerabilities evokes the inclination to engage in hyperactivity that includes the destroying or obfuscating of potentially worrying evidence of such problems and vulnerabilities, as well as dismantling the systems that warn of impending crises, because members and leaders of the culture are unable to bear the anxiety associated with such problems, vulnerabilities, and potential crises. It may also involve the inclination to proceed in a contemptuous and superior way in relation to those who bring information and views that may highlight risks and vulnerabilities that the culture faces. This over-activity constitutes a manic attack on both those warning the culture of its vulnerabilities and on the infrastructure of the warning systems, dramatically increasing the risks. Here too this may be entirely or partly unconscious, with the underlying motivations and dynamics that stimulate over-activity being unavailable for conscious thought in the minds of members and leaders of the culture. In sum, the members and leaders of a manic culture may have little or no awareness of how it functions and of its major components (denial, omnipotence, triumphalism, and over-activity), and this may result in highly potent and dangerous ways of thinking and acting that put the culture at risk.

The incubation of the 2008 credit crisis

The choice of cases

In moving on to examine the 2008 credit crisis, I argue that the events of 2008 were preceded by an “incubation period” (Turner, 1976; Turner & Pidgeon, 1997) of over two decades during which a culture of mania—manifest most clearly in the thinking and actions of those in positions of economic and political leadership—developed in relation to western

financial markets. I argue that this especially involved a manic response to the crises that capitalism faced during this period.

As a number of financial crises occurred during this incubation period (Gamble, 2009; Kindleberger, 1996), the decision to focus here on the Japanese and South East Asian/LTCM crisis needs some justification. The justification for this choice pivots principally on the wider significance and symbolic nature of these two crises: in slightly different ways, these crises—with features that were closely replicated in the 2008 debacle—vividly sent signals that should have warned the West that serious trouble was incubating in financial markets.

Beginning with the 1991 crisis in Japan, it is important to note that the Japanese economy had occupied an iconic position in the minds of economic and political leaders in post-war capitalist circles in the West, with western economies competing against each other in their attempts to emulate what was widely experienced as Japan's awesome and exemplary competitiveness, which, as Sir Peter Parker put it, had become "one of the paramount economic events of the post-war world" (Pascale & Athos, 1986, p. vii). It is also worth noting that the crisis that blew up in Japan pivoted on excesses in property markets. The parallels between the expansion of credit in the Japan and the incubating property crisis in the USA are remarkable, and were well-known to many. Writing as early as 1999, for example, Warburton warned that "since 1990, the USA and several other western countries have gone a long way towards emulating Japan's reckless credit expansion" (1999, p. 11), and that they were "paving the way for a crisis of immense proportions" (1999, p. 35). One would have imagined that excesses in property markets that caused a crisis so severe that it led to "Japan's lost decade" (*The Guardian*, 20 February 2008)—especially in what was previously seen as the exemplary and iconic economy—should have sent alarm signals to western leaders.

Turning now to the 1998 South East Asian/LTCM debacle, this was a crisis that, more than any other crisis during the post-war period prior to 2008, brought the world to the brink of global financial meltdown (Lowenstein, 2000). The 1998 fiasco was so serious that Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin called it the worst financial crisis in half a century (Lowenstein, 2000, p. 195). In a number of specific ways the crisis of 1998 closely prefigured the events of 2008. In particular, using highly dangerous leverage ratios, vast gambles in bond and derivatives markets were taken by banks and hedge-funds, leading to a situation where

the global financial system was within a hair's breadth of collapse. As Nobel Prize winner Paul Krugman has written, the South East Asia/LTCM debacle should have constituted "an object lesson" (Krugman, 2008, p. 164) warning of the impending dangers in the build-up to the 2008 credit crisis. In sum, because of their symbolic significance as crises that should have most strongly alerted western economies to the dangers they were incubating in the years leading up to 2008, the Japanese and South East Asia/LTCM cases are examined below.

The Japanese crisis

The crisis that struck Japan in 1991 had been preceded by a period of rapidly increasing property prices and the extensive use of sub-prime loans, with real estate prices for six major cities quadrupling between 1980 and 1991, and residential and commercial property prices skyrocketing everywhere, especially between 1986 and 1991. In 1991 Japan's property and stock bubble burst, leveraging land and stock prices into a "steep decline" (Krugman, 2008, p. 66), so that within a few years prices were around sixty per cent below their peak. The collapse caused serious damage and "wiped out company balance sheets [and] crippled the nation's banks" (*New York Times*, 25 December 2005). Initial attempts to deal with the crisis made little difference, with stimulus packages during the 1990s failing to revive the economy. Between 1994 and 2003, personal bankruptcies in Japan rose six-fold (*New York Times*, 25 December 2005). It was only following a massive \$500 billion rescue plan in 1998 (Krugman, 2008, p. 73), and several further years of struggle, that the Japanese economy began to show signs of recovery. The period—Japan's "lost decade"—only showed signs of recovery beginning around 2003 (Krugman, 2008, p. 73). The effects have in fact lasted longer than a decade, with the Japanese urban land index price index in 2005 being almost at the identical level to that of 1980, and it being only marginally higher by 2007.

Turning our attention to the West, it was precisely during Japan's "lost decade" that we witnessed the intensification of radical, unprecedented changes—begun in the 1980s—in both the regulatory structure and operation of western financial markets. Specifically, in 1991, the year that Japan's crisis began, the chief accountant of the US Securities and Exchange Commission wrote a guidance letter stating that companies could move leases off their books if outsiders were prepared

to bear just three per cent of the residual risk of the lease. As Partnoy argues, “the three percent rule became like law ... [and this] ... was an unsteady foundation for trillions of dollars of structured transactions” (2003, pp. 310–311). Then, in 1993, Wendy Gramm, the outgoing chair of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), signed an order exempting most over-the-counter derivatives, including swaps, from federal regulation (Partnoy, 2003, p. 147). One specific consequence of this was that, by removing the checks on the grandiose endeavours of the leadership at Enron, these legal and regulatory changes opened up the possibility of vast, unprecedented risk-taking and played a direct role in creating the conditions for the collapse of the company in 2001 (Stein, 2007). The consequences for other companies turned out, albeit at a later date, to be no less substantial.

These regulatory and legal changes were accompanied by the introduction and expansive use of a wide range of innovations in financial markets. Many of the changes were guided by the “Chicago school” of economics and the work of Nobel Laureate Merton Miller in particular. Inspired by Miller’s view that a key rationale for financial innovation was the need to avoid regulation, the use of such innovation exploded and spiralled rapidly during the 1990s, with there being massive increases in leverage and derivatives trades at this time (Tett, 2009, p. 35). These changes were also supported by a range of accounting and financial theories and practices that effectively “deny the possibility of financial asset market failure” (McSweeney, 2009, p. 835). Indicative of these changes was—in *Investment Dealers’ Digest* in 1992 (Partnoy, 2003, p. 72)—the first use of the term “structured note”, which refers to a debt obligation that contains an embedded derivative component. Within a few years the use of this term had become ubiquitous in finance circles.

At an organisational level, much of the financial innovation began around the start of the 1990s. Specifically, at J. P. Morgan, where many of these innovations were pioneered (Tett, 2009), it all started in the early 1990s, shortly after the bursting of the Japanese bubble. The early 1990s were—according to a key member of J. P. Morgan’s swaps team—“a type of crazy period” (Tett, 2009, p. 35) where “the herd instinct was ... amazing ...” (Tett, 2009, p. 35). In a similar way, beginning in the early 1990s, credit derivatives were being pioneered at Bankers Trust and Credit Suisse (Partnoy, 2003, p. 374). Indeed, by yielding a third of its profits, derivatives helped Bankers Trust become the most

profitable US bank between 1990 and 1993 (Partnoy, 2003, p. 60). While the total volume of derivatives contracts in the markets was estimated to be around \$865 billion in 1987 (Tett, 2009, p. 30), by June 1994, in the depth of the Japanese crisis, the total volume of interest rate and currency derivatives was estimated at \$12,000 billion—a sum larger than the US economy (Tett, 2009, p. 14). Much of the use of derivatives went under the radar of the regulatory regimes and constituted what came to be known as the “shadow banking system”, a system that in the West exploded exponentially during the time of Japan’s recession, and that was subsequently centrally implicated in the collapses of Enron and WorldCom, as well as the 1998 and the 2008 financial crises. There was also massive growth in the use of bonds during this time, with the world’s bond market growing from less than \$1 trillion in 1970 to more than \$23 trillion in 1997 (Warburton, 1999, p. 3).

It was not only in western financial markets that massive increases in risk-taking occurred during the time corresponding to Japan’s recession, but, also in the area of property in the West. In spite of the close parallels between the Japanese property bubble and the property bubbles that developed later in the USA and the UK, the dramatic changes in fortune for Japan seemed not to have constituted any deterrent for the West. Indeed, the period during and immediately following Japan’s recession saw massive increases in risk-taking in the West in the areas of housing and property markets, and this reached extraordinary levels in the US during the early part of the twenty-first century. Fuelled by “new era” (Shiller, 2008, p. 41) stories that spoke of “ever-rising home prices” (Krugman, 2008, p. 149), the US property market witnessed “a complete abandonment of traditional principles” (Krugman, 2008, p. 148). Mortgage originators “stopped worrying about repayment risk” (Shiller, 2008, p. 6), “made only perfunctory efforts to assess borrowers’ ability to repay their loans” (Shiller, 2008, p. 6), and required buyers to have little or no down payment. All this worked fine if the markets went up, but, as many people knew, if they went down, the entire edifice could collapse. An extraordinary housing bubble developed with sub-prime loans increasing dramatically from \$80 billion in 2000 to \$800 billion in 2005 (Tett, 2009, p. 112). The credit crisis of 2008, with its highly damaging consequences, resulted directly from this.

Especially given Japan’s prior status for many in the West as the iconic post-war economy, the woes of the Japanese during their “lost decade” did not go unnoticed. The parallels between the US and Japan were not lost on Japanese commentators such as Yukio Noguchi, perhaps

the world's leading authority on the Japanese bubble, and professor of finance at Tokyo's Waseda University and visiting professor at Stanford in 2004. For example, in an interview in 2005 Noguchi remarked that, when he was in the US in 2004, he experience a sense of "déjà vu ... [with] ... [p]eople in a rush to buy, and at extraordinary prices ... [t]he classic definition of a bubble" (*New York Times*, 25 December 2005).

Further, commentators and authorities in the West were also acutely aware of what had happened in Japan. Tim Geithner, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York at the time of the credit crisis, had deep, personal experience of Japan's problems when he was assistant financial attaché at the US Embassy in Tokyo. "During his tour in Japan", comments Sorkin (2009, p. 64), "Geithner witnessed firsthand the spectacular inflation and crushing deflation of his host's great bubble economy". Even more strikingly, Ben Bernanke, chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank at the time of the 2008 credit crisis, was an expert in economic crises, especially the Great Depression, and also did extensive research into the Japanese crisis of the 1990s (Krugman, 2008, p. 173). In his landmark "Great Moderation" speech of February 2004, Bernanke drew a sharp divide between the economies of the West and that of Japan. In the West, there had been a "dramatic change" (Bernanke, 2004, p. 1) over the previous twenty years leading to a "substantial decline in macroeconomic volatility" (Bernanke, 2004, p. 1), a "great moderation"—meaning the avoidance of extremes—that made him "optimistic about the future" (Bernanke, 2004, p. 8). Japan, on the other hand, was the exception to this rule due to its "distinctive set of economic problems" (Bernanke, 2004, p. 1). Even as late as the end of August 2008, just weeks before Lehman Brothers exploded, Bernanke confidently announced that "[w]e've learnt so much from the Great Depression and [the 1990s crisis in] Japan" (Sorkin, 2009, p. 221) that similar scenarios could be avoided in 2008. Given that the West was at the time heading relentlessly towards a crisis of even greater magnitude than that of Japan, Bernanke's depiction of the West's economic situation as the "great moderation"—and free of the problems that had beset Japan—suggests that even someone of his high intelligence was under the sway of this culture.

The South East Asian/LTCM crisis

While Japan was still floundering, a second major crisis—starkly demonstrating the inter-related and explosive nature of global financial markets—was brewing in 1997/8. The crisis was triggered

by the devaluation of the currency of Thailand, the baht, leading to a domino-like collapse of Asian economies, with contagion spreading further to Brazil and Russia. Following Russia's default on its debt repayments, the highly leveraged US hedge fund Long Term Capital Management (LTCM) was suddenly faced with \$4.6 billion debt (MacKenzie, 2003; Stein, 2003). LTCM's vast problems—including a staggering \$1.25 trillion of derivatives trades, leverage of at least 50:1, and losses of half a billion dollars in a single day on 21 August 1998—caused widespread fears in the leadership of the US financial community that, should the hedge fund go under, it may precipitate the collapse of global capitalism. Catastrophe was narrowly averted only by an emergency bailout orchestrated by the Federal Reserve Bank. "It was obvious", argued Partnoy in 2003, "that global markets were linked more closely than anyone had anticipated, so that a problem in Russia could lead to the collapse of a hedge fund in the United States" (2003, p. 262), resulting in a contagion that—it was feared—"may lead to meltdown in global financial markets" (Stein, 2003, p. 524).

Rather than constituting a warning, however, the South East Asian/LTCM financial crisis—like the Japanese crisis—seemed to do quite the opposite. Emblematic of this was what occurred at the organisational level at J. P. Morgan, where, as has been mentioned, much of the pioneering work around financial innovation occurred (Tett, 2009). When, in mid-1997, the Asian crisis resulted in "painful losses" (Tett, 2009, p. 59) within J. P. Morgan's commercial lending group, the company responded with a radical attempt to become more profitable by industrialising Credit Default Swaps (Tett, 2009, p. 59). Although other banks had experimented with such practices, it was at J. P. Morgan—and explicitly in response to the Asian crisis—that the idea of "securitisation" took hold and "transformed the field" (Tett, 2009, p. 60). Thus, during and immediately after the South East Asian/LTCM fiasco, there was a massive increase in credit derivative deals with, in October 1999, the official volume being estimated at \$229 billion, six times the level it was just two years earlier, with J. P. Morgan accounting for almost half the total (Tett, 2009, p. 80). Indeed, by mid-2005, there were a staggering \$12 trillion of Credit Default Swaps contracts, a sum equivalent to the size of the entire US economy (Tett, 2009, p. 152).

If the LTCM crisis pivoted on its extraordinarily high leverage and on the unregulated status of hedge funds, it is striking that the US authorities made no moves to limit these risks. On the contrary, on every front,

its actions took the economy much further down the high-risk road. Just a year after the 1998 crisis, the US authorities repealed the landmark Glass-Steagall Act that—following the devastation wreaked by the 1929–1932 Wall Street crash—had afforded major protection for global financial markets for nearly seven decades. The removal of the Glass-Steagall provisions, that had separated out commercial from investment banks, has subsequently been seen by many, including Barack Obama, to have played a pivotal role in creating the conditions for the 2008 credit crisis. This repeal was followed shortly by the 2000 Commodity Futures Modernization Act that decreed that swaps (Tett, 2009, p. 87) and over-the-counter and energy derivatives (Partnoy, 2003, p. 295) would be exempt from regulation, a decision that vastly increased the scope of the unregulated “shadow banking system”, thereby substantially increasing the risks involved.

Then, in a little noticed but highly significant act, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in April 2004 dramatically lifted the “leverage ratio” control that had restricted what brokerages could do (Tett, 2009, p. 159), thereby allowing investment banks and brokerages such as Merrill Lynch to massively increase its leverage ratio to thirty-two, Morgan Stanley to thirty-three, Bear Stearns to thirty-three, and Lehman Brothers to twenty-nine (Tett, 2009, p. 172). This substantially increased the vulnerability of the financial system by enabling investment banks and brokerages to use leverage ratios that had previously been the exclusive preserve of hedge funds.

Extraordinarily, such liberalisation continued even after the subprime crisis had begun. With signs of the crisis having started to show at the end of 2006 and early 2007, in 2007 the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) abolished the “uptick rule” that, since 1938, had protected stocks by stopping investors from continually shorting them. The 2007 abolition of the “uptick rule” made it possible for hedge funds and others “to blitzkrieg ... companies and drive their stock down” (Sorkin, 2009, p. 98), and this played a key role in the downfall of a number of institutions, especially Lehman Brothers, just a year later.

In the financial markets the derivatives activities of various parties—and especially the investment banks—were increasingly part of the “shadow banking system” and thus under the radar of the regulatory system, and this made them highly vulnerable. Even before the SEC April 2004 ruling, writing in 2003, Partnoy argued presciently that these investment banks were “LTCMs-in-waiting” (2003, p. 262). Many others

have added their voices to the argument that LTCM should have acted as a warning. These were not just isolated “Cassandras”, but highly respected economists, academics, and Nobel Prize winners, many of whom warned that the situation was becoming explosive. Rather than saying that the 2008 credit crisis is like nothing we’ve seen before, we should, following Nobel prize winner Krugman, “say that it’s like everything we’ve seen before, all at once: a bursting real estate bubble comparable to what happened in Japan ... a wave of bank runs ... a liquidity trap ... and a wave of currency crises all too reminiscent of what happened to Asia in the late 1990s” (2008, p. 166).

The incubation of the financial crisis and the culture of mania

Returning to the Japanese crisis, it would thus appear that, rather than constituting a warning, the Japanese property bubble may simply have entrenched and given further vigour to the extremes of western capitalism. I argue that the collapse of the Japanese housing bubble and the Japanese economy during the 1990s caused considerable anxiety in the West, and that this anxiety was triumphed over via the manic delusion that the housing issues in the West belonged to a “new economy” of a different order, and that these problems did not, and could not, apply in the West. This manic culture was thus underscored by a shared assumption that, in contrast with the Japanese situation, the boom-bust cyclical nature of Western financial markets had been contained and could be consigned to the annals of history, replaced by a bountiful “new economy” of endless success.

Thus, feelings of triumph drove western capitalism to go to great lengths to distinguish itself and prove its superiority over Japan, and this encouraged an exponential increase in risk-taking in precisely those areas in which the Japanese had failed, namely property. This may also be understood as a feature of mania, because, instead of constituting a warning, the intrusions of reality simply reinforce and strengthen the manic sense of omnipotence and invulnerability, so that property, the area of Japan’s failure, becomes a key area of unprecedented risk-taking in the USA.

In a similar way to the response to the Japanese property crisis, the Asian/LTCM financial debacle of 1997/8 seems to have provoked a triumphalist reaction involving a multi-faceted, exponential increase in risk-taking. Rather than heeding the implications of the crisis, the

catastrophe that engulfed South East Asia, Russia, and LTCM seems to have encouraged a desire to increase dramatically the risks precisely in the areas in which the financial markets had been vulnerable. First, although the Glass-Steagall Act had already been chipped away by earlier legislative changes, its 1999 revocation finally removed the legislation that had for over half a century protected the world against a recurrence of the Great Depression. Second, by liberalising the rules so that merchant banks could indulge in wild and excessive risk-taking that had previously been the preserve of the hedge funds, the seeds were sown for the collapse of these banks, one that played a pivotal role in the 2008 crisis. Finally, by facilitating an exponential growth in the unregulated “shadow banking system”, risks could be, and were, substantially increased. We can understand this as a triumphant, manic response whereby the crisis of 1998 constituted a provocation to the capitalist West that it should demonstrate that it could succeed and, indeed, thrive, precisely in the areas in which LTCM, South East Asia, and Russia had foundered. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the more western capitalism was beleaguered by a range of such collapses, the more manic and triumphant it became.

The broader context and the turn to mania

If mania was such a predominant feature of the culture during this period, we need to enquire why it occurred in such virulent form at this time. To understand why this was we need to turn to the broader economic and political history of the twentieth century, and specifically to the collapse of communism, the history of which is now familiar to most of us. Bolstered most obviously by the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1917, the creation of the eastern bloc in 1945, and the founding of the Communist Republic in China in 1948, variants of the communist alternative burgeoned during much of the twentieth century. In the West, a small minority—especially in Europe—embraced communism, while many others detested it. In the USA, the McCarthy years of the 1950s, the Bay of Pigs and Cuban Missile Crisis years of the early 1960s, as well as the Korean and Vietnamese wars, all testify to the sense in which the communist alternative—whether loved or hated—was seen to occupy a potent global threat to capitalism. It is noteworthy that during these years (up until the late 1970s/early 1980s), stock market capitalism remained relatively constrained. I argue therefore that

communism functioned not only as an alternative to capitalism but as a socio-psychological “brake” that set limits to the extremes to which capitalist culture would go.

However, following seven decades of increases in the number of countries under communist rule, a period of the radical dismantling of the economic and political structures of communism ensued. Specifically, starting with the political changes in Poland and Gorbachev’s glasnost and perestroika reform programmes in the Soviet Union, radical political and economic changes were underway. This sweeping movement culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Velvet Revolution of 1989 during which the political, economic, and social order of an entire swathe of East European countries crumbled. Following this, the mighty Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—for much of the century the central icon of communism—collapsed. Further, while political structures in China changed little, the structure of the country’s economy moved significantly away from communist orthodoxy and was increasingly integrated into global capitalism.

The extraordinary demise of communism coincides precisely with the period of the incubation of the credit crisis, and there are indications that suggest that the development of this manic culture was influenced by unconscious triumphant feelings about communism’s collapse. I thus argue that the dramatic collapse of communism signalled how vulnerable a political and economic system can be, and that—rather than allowing themselves to be worried about this—those in positions of political and economic leadership in the West engaged in a manic, triumphant response according to which communism’s collapse simply proved that a capitalist market free of regulatory constraint was right after all. Thus, those acting under the banners of “economic liberalisation”, “free markets”, and “light-touch regulation” were increasingly influenced by the shared unconscious idea that the capitalist economies would do best if they eschewed any resemblance to the communist economies, and that the unfettered growth of free markets and unrestrained risk-taking were unquestionable axioms of good capitalism.

I argue therefore that the collapse of communism can be understood to have reminded the capitalist West—at least at an unconscious level—of its own vulnerability, and that the overwhelming response to this was an inclination to engage furiously in activity that would obliterate any anxiety associated with such a reminder. Such furious activity, which included the stripping away of the last remnants of effective financial

regulation and governance in the West, thus served the function of further entrenching the radical gulf between the capitalist and communist economies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper makes contributions both to theory and to the understanding of the credit crisis. There are two contributions to theory. First, working with ideas from psychoanalysis and its application to social and organisational dynamics, the theoretical framework of a "culture of mania" is formulated and developed. This culture is specified in terms of the four characteristics of denial, omnipotence, triumphalism, and over-activity. Second, also drawing on psychoanalytic ideas, this paper contributes a new notion of denial to the literature. While denial is usually taken to refer to the overlooking or ignoring of vulnerabilities and problems, the idea of "manic denial" developed in this paper refers to the concept that warning signs are indeed noted and observed, but that they serve not as warnings but as provocations to act manically in taking on more extreme risks.

Regarding the understanding of the credit crisis, I have argued in this paper that, as well as focusing on the actions of the individual parties that played a role in the creation of the crisis, we need to probe deeper and examine the shift in culture in western society that created the conditions for such a crisis to occur. Drawing on psychoanalytic ideas and their application to social and organisational dynamics, I develop a conceptual framework around the notion of a manic culture and apply it to our understanding of the 2008 credit crisis.

Focusing especially on the Japanese and Asian/LTCM crises, I argue that a series of major ruptures in capitalist economies were observed and noted by those in positions of economic and political leadership in western societies. I suggest that these ruptures caused considerable anxiety among these leaders, but that, rather than heeding the lessons of these crises, such leaders responded by manic, omnipotent, and triumphant attempts to prove the superiority of their economies in relation to the vulnerabilities thrown up by these ruptures. This response thus entailed the destruction and obfuscation of the data and the dismantling of regulatory warning systems, as well as the creation of reassuring myths such as the "great moderation", all of which led to a culture in which massive increases in risk-taking were seen to be justified. I go

on to argue that this manic culture was influenced by a triumphant response in the West to the collapse of communism. I argue that the conditions for the 2008 credit crisis were thereby set in place.

If the financial crisis of 2008 startled us, we should be reminded that this was not the first time that a social and economic system should founder on the rocks of mania and triumphalism. Writing in the fifth century BC, the Greek historian Thucydides described how the omnipotence of the Athenians—as well as their desire to triumph over the Spartan enemy—led the great Athenian civilisation to disaster (Thucydides, 1972). In my attempt to follow the tradition set by Thucydides, I hope that, by analysing and trying to understand history, I can make some contribution to the literature that will help us learn from the past. While I have argued that our culture is unwittingly and subtly influenced by forces of which we often have limited awareness and control, I hope that our understanding of these matters will go some way to diminish the power of these forces in the future.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

Reflective space and the exercise of power

James Krantz

Psychoanalytic explorations of social and organisational life inevitably lead to thorny paradoxes and contradictions. Here, in *Psychoanalytic Essays on Power and Vulnerability*, a paradox of enormous importance for our time is brought into sharp focus: power and vulnerability, intimately related to one another in a complex interplay, relying on each other for creative, integrated action. And also in a death grip: when one side dominates, paranoid-schizoid life emerges as either impotence or omnipotence.

As many of the authors in this rich collection illustrate, the mature exercise of power requires acceptance of one's vulnerability. Without it, unchecked omnipotent fantasies fuel toxicity and destructiveness. Defensive postures, mobilised to ward off the humbling recognition of limitations and uncertainties, are painfully depicted. Nagel, for example, describes how an aura of invincibility and invulnerability distorted the thinking, and subsequent actions, of a board of directors. Or Henderson's comparison of Hitler and Gandhi, as archetypal inspirational leaders, highlighting the crucial importance of tempering idealism with modesty, fairness, and justice.

Coming from a non-psychoanalytic stance, but one that dovetails perfectly, Schoultz introduces us to the challenges faced by the Navy

SEALs of maintaining a culture of honour, sacrifice, and teamwork within a social context that lionises rebellious, heroic, narcissistic warriors, now amplified by celebrity after the bin Laden mission. But he also warns of simply idealising one side of the polarity—as embodied by the honor-bound Hector of Troy—at the expense of disowning the other side—personified by the passionate, zealous Achilles. Schoultz argues that integrating the passion and spirit of the mythos with the rationality and professionalism of the ethos is necessary to engage in the complex realities of twenty-first century warfare. Who is Helen of Troy in his analogy, I wonder?

When unable to be integrated, the paradoxical interdependence of power and vulnerability, that governs effectively exercising authority, creates unending mischief and suffering. The psychological underpinnings of these challenges are explored beautifully in several chapters, such as by Lazar's description of the psychic roots of this integrative capability. He shows how the origins of mutual interdependency can be traced to early development. He reminds us of the sober challenge of achieving civilised states of mind under stressful conditions. In a complementary discussion, Perini builds on a recognition that both narcissistic grandiosity and narcissistic vulnerability give voice to an underlying sense of inferiority which, in turn, fosters malicious envy. He describes how this pathological constellation of object relations affects groups and institutions and, in doing so, uncovers another paradox: the workplace stimulates the very envy that it then disturbs.

Another connecting thread concerns the erosion of structures, communities, symbol systems, and other containing structures, without which the anxieties inherent in organisational life are often too much to handle. When overwhelmed, we see the destructive patterns described, for example, in Stein's discussion of manic defences fueling the 2008 credit crisis or the perverse incentive framework that institutionalises fantasies of omnipotence and certainty described by Leder. Other distortions and toxic dynamics that arise when power and vulnerability are in pathological relation to one another, and no longer able to inform each other in the service of mature action, are found under the microscope of authors.

Others look through a wider aperture, focusing on the societal level. Schwartz draws on the 2011 British riots to illustrate how the authoritarian speech codes and puritanical regulations of political correctness

erode social relations and undermine the very social order they are ostensibly meant to reinforce. Morgan-Jones addresses the cross-generational impact of societal humiliation and shame resulting from the destructive exercise of power. He raises the possibility that traumatic, disgracing, and un-metabolised events of twentieth century Europe are reappearing in the form of a perverse, sado-masochistic imposition of extreme austerity measures. Basing action on the primitive and traumatic experience of humiliation serves, he suggests, as a kind of omnipotent defence against the more complex experience of humility, which requires recognition of one's own culpability.

The trilogy

As a set, these essays provide a wide ranging and deeply considered exploration of dynamics that underlie today's social and organisational world. While each volume and each chapter tells its own story, they also tell a common one. The psychodynamic perspective provides a vantage point to make meaning of events and, ultimately, suggests a creative approach to addressing them. Not through formulaic solutions or comforting bromides, but by recognising that the vexing paradoxes and contradictions must be "held" rather than resolved. "Holding" that amounts to creating the kind of space for thought described by Cardona in her essay about client-consultation relationships. Where the space cannot be held we see another thread that ties the essays together: dysfunction, violence, deadness, and destructiveness.

In one sense, this trilogy renders visible a polarity between the integrative, enabling creativity arising from reflective practice and the destructive, paranoid-schizoid world of concrete thinking and primitive defensives. While in the twentieth century the quintessential form of concrete thinking was totalitarianism, in the twenty-first it is fundamentalism. The counterpoint to concreteness is abstract thinking—symbolisation—where we realise that reality can be understood from different perspectives. Concrete thinking, on the other hand, entails living without possibilities, where ambiguity and uncertainty are the enemy. The politics of certainty requires strategies for eliminating difference, which reminds us of the intimate connection between freedom and tolerance of ambiguity.

Rather than enforcing dogma, the "reflective side" of the polarity endeavours to unsettle and oppose, to test orthodoxies, to offer routes

by which minds can travel from one culture to another and learn estrangement from one's own. Fundamentalist thinking is often subtle and covert; questioning can be perilous. After all, the citizens of Athens condemned Socrates to death for corrupting the youth, which meant teaching them to think.

Perhaps what Freud failed to recognise is the possibility of a depressive-position religion, one based on mature faith. How can the magical, paranoid-schizoid, dynamics that prohibit thought, doubt, and curiosity be overcome? The response to concrete, fundamentalist modes of thought suggested in this trilogy involves the embrace of reflective practice. A practice that can lead to a new understanding rationality—rationality that exists in a larger context that includes ambiguity, the non-rational, and the paradoxical contradictions inherent in social systems. The authors here help us visualise a twenty-first century concept of rationality that is appropriate for our complex, ever-changing, and challenging world. They point toward a world in which forms of containment, suited to emerging realities, establish the capacity for integration and meaningful citizenship. And they remind us to remember not to forget what people are capable of and to remember what needs to be thought about.

In this sense, this trilogy can be situated in exactly such a state of mind. It can be seen as functioning as a kind of third space itself—a space where ambivalence, anxiety, doubt are embraced as the foundation for creativity and mature interdependence.

To end with another paradox, a Zen koan on knowing and not-knowing:

Great doubt: great awakening
 Little doubt: little awakening
 No doubt: no awakening.

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